

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

For NPS use only

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

received **MAR 20 1984**
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Sheldahl First Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church

and or common

2. Location

street & number 3rd and Willow Sts, not for publication

city, town Sheldahl vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Story code 169

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Osmund and Anna Sheldahl Memorial Society

street & number c/o Ms. Marion A. Curphey

city, town Sheldahl vicinity of state Iowa 50243

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk's Office

street & number Story County Courthouse

city, town Nevada state Iowa 50201

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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 Sheldahl 1st Norwegian Evan. Luth. Church was built by Norwegian immigrant Osmund Sheldahl. This remarkably well preserved vernacular frame building calls attention to the presence of an early Norwegian settlement party in Story County, and represents the unique voluntary ministerial efforts of Sheldahl to that community during the years 1883 through 1896.

The balloon frame building is nearly square on plan (28'5" by 30'8"), stands 25' tall and is oriented with its longer side on a north-south line. Based on a raised rubble stone foundation, the mass includes an attic area above the sanctuary which is reached by means of a blue trap door above the pulpit. The exterior covering is 4 1/2" clapboard and the gable roof is of wood shingle. An open hipped roof bellfry surmounts the front of the roofridge, while an interior brick flue (which begins 13' above the floorline and is supported by a wall bracket) exits on the opposite end.

A seven foot pair of paneled doors are centered on the south entrance. Fenestration is otherwise limited to the two sidewalls, and consists of three evenly spaced 2/2 double hung sash windows.

The frame consists of native white pine, side walls of vertical members spaced two feet on center. Interior wall surfaces consist of a 38" wainscoting, painted yellow brown to match interior window frames, and a horizontal planking of uneven widths (ranging from 6 to 18 inches). The ceiling similarly consists of 5" planking running parallel to the longer side of the plan. Corner boards, plain window surrounds, enclosed overhangs are exterior finer elements of detail. The building has no guttering. A carved wooden sign of recent vintage identifies the builder and date of construction and is placed above the entrance.

The interior plan has a central aisle with ranks of pews on either side. Those on the left-hand center are shortened on their aisle ends to accommodate a wood burning pot bellied stove ("Old Hyprion #5", patented in 1868). A long diagonally set stove pipe with five ceiling supports connects to the flue base above the pulpit in front. A raised organ platform is in the northwest corner, and three long pews set perpendicular to the aisle fill the northeast corner. A centered raised pulpit with side steps and a semi-circular front with kneeling rail and turned balusters supports a paneled three-sided raised pulpit.

The interior features are all original and are remarkably well preserved. The furnishings evidence decorative cabinet work details. Scrolled brass lamps and bracket extensions are also preserved (not kept in church).

As a vernacular statement, the church interior features are dominant. These include the use of fairly untreated and whitewashed interior surface materials, the uneven wall planking, the location and treatment of the stove, the blue colored trap door (symbolic perhaps of the vernacular treatment of porch ceilings with bright colors), and the overall interior arrangement, and furnishings themselves, all having been locally produced. The overall plan and mass of the building presents a symmetrical design. Corner boards,

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Continuation sheet Physical Description

Item number 7

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window surrounds, and the enclosed overhangs are all popular or polite architectural components. Vernacular exterior components would include the broader spacing of the vertical frame elements, the thicker vertical window muntins (as opposed to thinner horizontal muntins), the open bellfry, the flue treatment, and the use of local materials and non-professional builders in the construction.

The building remains unchanged. Some mid-1970 restoration work removed later-date interior wall board coverings and restored the whitewashed surface. The roof was reshingled and the exterior repainted. The carved sign probably dates from this work. The building presently is undergoing repair and restoration. The exterior has been primed to eavesline, the roof replaced with new cedar shingles, and the building leveled. The suspended chimney had bowed the rear wall and was rebuilt, with its base in the attic, three feet below the eavesline, and a drywall casing was used to recreate the original appearance of the bracketted flue below the ceiling. The chimney is still functional with a triple liner inside. Uncompleted work to be done this year includes sash repair, the completion of exterior painting, and the electrification of the interior gas lamps. New photos will be submitted following the completion of all of this work.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	___ commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/ <u>settlement</u>	___ philosophy	___ theater
___ 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1883-96 **Builder/Architect** Osmund Sheldahl

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Sheldahl 1st Norwegian Evang. Luth. Church was built by Norwegian immigrant Osmund Sheldahl. This remarkably well preserved vernacular frame building calls attention to the presence of an early Norwegian settlement party in Story County, and represents the unique voluntary ministerial efforts of Sheldahl to that community during the years 1883 through 1896.

Osmund Sheldahl (1824-1900) settled in Illinois in 1845, preached there for ten years as a lay minister to his fellow Norwegian immigrants, and in 1854 came with three neighbors to the Sheldahl-Huxley area in Story County Iowa to search for cheap good land. The next year, twenty one families (106 persons) who had previously organized themselves as the "Palestine Congregation" made the trek to that location and settled. Sheldahl and J. S. Polk platted the town of Sheldahl. Sheldahl became a large land owner and in 1860 became a regular minister in the Palestine Lutheran Church. He actually built a house in Sheldahl only in 1877, and thereafter conducted his services in private homes. The 1883 construction date for his church, built by himself and his two sons, appears to be confirmed by at least one historical source. The carved sign on the building, which states "Sheldahl Norwegian Lutheran Church founded in 1883 by Pastor Osmund Sheldahl" is apparently of recent date.

Sheldahl "...invited one and all, who wanted Bible preaching, to come to the services, because he would preach the Bible and nothing but the Bible." He would serve thirteen years as an unpaid minister. His 1898 will specified that the church should be made available to any denomination as long bible teaching was emphasized. Regular church use continued until 1936.

The church is a unusual example of a private church on private land, provided for public use and maintained by the founder's family and heirs.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property ~~less than one acre~~

Quadrangle name Polk City

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5
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4	6	3	4	9	4	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

All of Lot 4, Block 2, original town of Sheldahl, beginning at southwest corner of same and measuring south 66', east 66', north 66', and west 66' to place of beginning.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date 6 March 1984
Historical Building

street & number E. 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

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 Adrian S. Anderson

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department date 3/6/84

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

for Sylvia Byers Entered in the National Register date 5/11/84
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Bibliography

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- Flom, George T. "The Growth of the Scandinavian Factor in The Population of Iowa," Iowa Journal of History and Politics, 4 (April 1906), 267-285.
- Norlie, Olaf M. Norsk Lutherske Menigheter i Amerika, 1843-1916. 2 Vols. Minneapolis, Augusburg Publishing House, 1918.