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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section _7	/	Page	_1	Property name	Danish Lutheran Church	
				County and State	Buena Vista County Jowa	

7. Narrative Description

SITE

The Danish Lutheran Church is situated on Lot 13, Block 9 of the original plat of Alta, Iowa, Buena Vista County, in northwest Iowa. This parcel of land measures approximately 50 feet by 100 feet. The church building measures 35 feet by 26 feet. The north facade of the church abuts almost directly on the north property line of the parcel. A concrete pedestrian walk runs along the west side of the church. Another pedestrian walk runs along the south side of the church and leads into the church entrance. The small 10 foot by ten-foot entrance vestibule also served as coal storage.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This tiny graying building at the corner of Fourth and Cherokee Streets in Alta, Iowa is currently serving as a storage-warehouse for antique furniture and garden tools by its owner, but for many area residents the fading structure is full of memories of Sunday afternoon worship and Sunday Schools with members of the Alta Danish community.

BUILDING

The foundation of the church is stone. The stones are firmly standing and supporting the wooden structure. The building features simple wood siding and colorful glass windows (some of which are missing) in a Gothic design. It is in need of paint and the wooden shingles on the east roof need to be replaced. The roof on the west side is also deteriorating, but was once re-shingled, using asphalt shingles.

Other than the small entrance vestibule, the church possesses only one room. Originally, the church featured a center aisle flanked by church pews and the congregation faced the North. The inside of the church is one room, simple but beautiful. It is quite plain, with 6-inch wide wood floors. None of the pews remain. The walls and ceiling are covered with pressed metal panels. There are several areas of the ceiling that are deteriorating and six-foot wide holes are visible. Historically, there were kerosene hanging lamps near the windows, a brass candlestick holder for three candles and a small antique claw foot oak table used by the altar. There was also a railing across the front of the altar used for kneeling and receiving communion. There is a round window above the entrance vestibule. The vestibule also features a rectangular door with transom above set within a Gothic arch surround.

Danish Lutheran Church

Name of Property

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark 'x' in one or more boxes for the criteria qualitying the property for National Register listing.)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

_ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has vielded, or is likely to vield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- X A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- E removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Che the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 57) has been requested.
- ____previously listed in the National Register
- _ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- X Other

Name of repository Buena Vista County Historical Society

County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions) Ethnic heritage/European

Period of Significance 1887-ca.1930

Significant Dates 1887

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Buena Vista County, Iowa

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8	Page	2	Property name	Danish Lutheran Church	-
			County and State	Buena Vista County, Iowa	_

INTEGRITY OF THE BUILDING

The Danish Lutheran Church maintains a high degree of all seven aspects of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It is located in the middle of a small town and has been at this location for 122 years. The Gothic design is simple and the building is small. Nothing concerning size has been altered on the building; however, wooden shingles have been replaced with asphalt shingles on the west roof. They are also beginning to deteriorate. The stone foundation, the exterior walls, and the Gothic windows remain as they were originally constructed. The interior retains its original wainscoating, the decorative pressed metal upper walls and ceiling. A small antique communion table and the ornate organ still remain with descendants of the original members and bring a feeling of connection to their Danish ancestors and a link to the importance of a religious connection to our past. The organ is safe in one of the original member's descendant's home.

Alta is in need of lots on which to build new housing. However, this lot is not a full lot and any type of housing could not be built here. The City of Alta looks at the building as being a potential "fire trap" and are asking for its demolition to make a safer neighborhood for homes in this area.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8	Page	3	Property name	Danish Lutheran Church

County and State Buena Vista County, Iowa

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1887, the Danish Lutheran Church is locally significant under National Register Criterion A, because it is a religious property which derives its primary significance from its association with Danish settlement in Buena Vista County. The period of significance, under Criterion A, is circa 1887 to 1930, the time when the congregation that built the church worshipped there. The property contains one resource for this nomination, the church itself, which is contributing and classified as a building. Criteria Consideration A has been satisfied because the property derives its primary significance from its historical association with the area's Danish settlers. Additional research may also result in Criterion C eligibility for the building.

The Danish Lutheran Church society was formed in Alta at a meeting held on February 22, 1880. Forty-two persons composed the charter membership. In 1887 the society erected their church building, 24 feet by 36 feet, costing \$1,000.00. It was built by donations and is still standing at the corner of 4th and Cherokee Streets. Rev. Amos Johnson was the first Minister. Following him, the pastors in succession were: Rev. H. Jorgensen, H. Jensen, H. Knudsen, A. Kjolhede, H.E. Bondo, and P. Rassmussen. Services were held once a month. G. Lauridsen was the first secretary for the society. Nels Christensen later served in this capacity.

Church services were held at least once a month, by a traveling minister, in the Danish language, Rev. O. Soe came by train from Orange City where he lived and had charge of churches in Marcus and Orange City. Services in the English language were offered in the 1930's. As time passed, members shifted membership to Trinity Lutheran Church, also located in Alta, and as membership dwindled the Danish Lutheran Church was dissolved.

The Danish Lutheran Church in Alta provided an important ethnic connection for Danish immigrants. During the period from 1865 to 1914 over 300,000 people emigrated from Denmark. According to the 1885 Iowa State Census, some 317 Buena Vista County residents were born in Denmark. More arrived in the ensuing years, the the Danish Lutheran Church, constructed in 1887, offered a welcome link with their homeland. "Although many Danes emigrated to gain religious freedom and to escape the Lutheran Church." the majority maintained their connection to the Lutheran Church in their new home. (Martin, 369) The first Danes to establish permanent settlements in Iowa were migrants from Wisconsin. Great numbers of Danes were attracted to the United States with the opportunity to settle the open lands of the Great Plains and the West. The first Dane known to have settled in Iowa was Niels Christian Boye, who came to Muscatine County in 1827, to settle an inheritance left by his brother.

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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			County and State	Buena Vista County, Iowa	

The Danes did not settle in the Northwest area of Iowa until 1865-1868. The first Danish pioneer in the western part of the state was Christopher Mynster. The Danish city colonies and rural settlements in the northern and northwestern parts of the state were of later dates than in other areas of Iowa.

Denmark was overpopulated in the rural areas, with land usually handed down to the oldest son, leaving younger children landless. As a result, they and small land holders were forced to work as day laborers on other farms to try to earn a living. Many of the landless men became immigrants, often moving to urban areas in search of work. Here they gained new skills and experience in crafts and trade, and eventually immigrated to the United States.

Denmark also experienced changes in agricultural production. Russia, South America and the United States flooded the market, making European grain unprofitable. In Denmark the cost of living was higher and the wages were lower than what a farm worker or craftsman would expect to earn in the United States. The desire to receive those 150-300% higher wages inspired many to immigrate to the United States. Many rural workers were in debt and lived in bleak conditions, being able to purchase only the bare essentials.

Political considerations also played an important role in the decisions of many to emigrate. Dispute between Denmark and Prussia forced Denmark to relinquish its claim to the border region of Schleswig-Holstein. They objected to the use of the German language and compulsory military service. About 150,000 people were estimated to have immigrated in order to avoid Prussian rule and the military draft.

Great numbers of Danes were attracted to the United States with the opportunity to settle the open lands of the Great Plains and the West. People from Sweden and Norway ventured to the United States much earlier than the Danish people. According to the United States census of 1860 there were only 5,540 Danes in the United States, with 20,931 from Norway and Sweden. Norwegians ventured to America in the early forties, the Swedish people in the late forties and the Danish people in the fifties, arriving from the smaller islands of Moen, Aero, Langeland and Lolland. A few small Danish colonies date back to 1844 and the years immediately following. The most extensive immigration was after 1864 coming from the providence of Sleswig. Statistics show that there were only 129 Danes in the United States in 1820; in 1840 only 1252.

The Homestead Act gave government land to any head of family, widow or single person over 21, who was a citizen or intended to become a citizen and actually settled the land. They could choose to receive 160 acres of land at \$1.25/acre or 80 acres valued at \$2.50/acre. The strongest

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8	Page	_5	Property name	Danish Lutheran Church
			County and State	Buena Vista County, Iowa

motivation was the personal ties with relative and friends who had already immigrated to the United States. They sent letters home with good reports about America and asking loved ones to join them. With family and friends living in groups they were able to maintain some degree of their native culture and traditions. Danish immigration reached its peak in 1890.

Organized immigration from Denmark is of much more recent date than that from Norway or Sweden. There were occasional immigrants from Denmark but the most extensive immigration started around 1864. Most immigrants remained in the Eastern area of America and established their Lutheran churches in their area. Gradually people moved westward.

Religious activities in Buena Vista County began in the region of Storm Lake. More activities followed upon the opening of the Dubuque and Sioux City Railway and the platting of the town of Storm Lake. Rev. Thomas Whitely, a Methodist circuit preacher, conducted the first services in Buena Vista County, on the Chamberlain farm, south of the Mineral Springs at the west end of the lake. Various Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists organized in Storm Lake over the next 20 years.

Alta, a few miles west of Storm Lake, was settled in 1850, and in the years that followed, many of the new families that arrived were of Scandinavian birth, moving largely from Rockford and Chicago, Illinois. In May 1874 representatives of 16 families, both Swedish and Norwegian, adopted a church constitution. The organization of the Lutheran Trinity Church of Alta soon erected the first meeting house in town. In 1881 a larger house of worship was erected and a cemetery was laid out by the Swedish people to be shared by the Norwegians and Danes of the area.

As the Danish people immigrated to the United States, the Danish Lutheran Church was then formed in Alta in 1880. Religion was important to the Danish people, even though a pastor from a neighboring town only came once a month to conduct services. For this group of people to build and own a church building was an important part of their life.

Although the Danish house of worship had numerous families attending the local parish, services were held only once a month when the pastor could make the trip from Newell (where the pastors were based out of the Nain Lutheran Church in Newell) or from other nearby towns. The Rev. Haadon Jorgensen was the minister most local residents remember. He was a kind and friendly pastor, and although he was not a dynamic speaker he was pleasant and casual in his sermons. After services in Alta, he would go to the home of a member of the congregation for coffee and fellowship. The Danish members were considered "happy go lucky" people.

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		County and State	Buena Vista County, Iowa

For the children of this congregation to receive their confirmation instruction, it was an all day affair. They would board the train at 8:00am at Alta, Iowa to travel to Newell where the pastor lived. They would receive their confirmation instruction and start their return trip to Alta at 2:00pm. In later years, students were transported by car on Sunday afternoon by their fathers to Newell to receive their confirmation. These children were later confirmed at the Nain Lutheran Church in Newell.

The church was active with memberships, activities, and Sunday school for a number of years, but as original family members grew older, the younger generations either left the area or joined the later formed Alta Trinity Lutheran Church. This church also had Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian membership.

The building was also used by the Missouri Lutheran Church of Hanover, Iowa for approximately five years during World War II (1942-1947). During the war years, although gas was rationed, pastors were allowed more gas than others and therefore Pastor Barr from Hanover traveled the eight miles to Alta to give religious instructions to the youth instead of each family traveling to Hanover.

It is important for the remaining descendants and some former members of this Danish Lutheran Church to see this church building repaired and remain at its original location. Grants will be applied for, to repair the roof, windows, ceiling, and the walls of the church. Local people, especially the Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish population of the area, will give their contributions and labor support to restore this building and establish an attractive flower garden and gazebo on the grounds.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9	Page 7	Property name	Danish Lutheran Church	

County and State

Buena Vista County, Iowa

9. Major Bibliographical Sources

BIBLIOGRAPHY

History Book Committee. Bethany Lutheran Church History Book: 100 Years in Christ, 1890-1990. Audubon, Iowa: Jumbo Jack's Cookbook Company, 1990.

Flom, George T. "The Danish Contingent in the Population of Early Iowa." *Iowa Journal of History* and Politics. 4:220-244, 1906.

Martin, Suzanne B. "Danish Americans." Richard T. Schaefer, ed. Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008).

Rogers, Leah and Roslea Johnson. "The Ethnic Historic Settlement of Shelby and Audubon Counties, 1860-1941." June 1991.

Warren, J.N. Northwestern lowa: Its History and Traditions, 1804-1926. S.J. Clarke Pub. Co. Chicago. 1927.

The Danish Immigrant Museum website available at http://www.danishmuseum.org

ORAL HISTORY

Charles Nielsen and wife, Martha Vesgaard Nielsen, were interviewed in May of 2008 and were important sources of information as their families were former members of the Danish congregation.

Danish Lutheran Church

Buena Vista County, Iowa County and State

Name of Property

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	// Zone	 ////////////_
2	// Zone	
3	// Zone	
4	// Zone See continua	

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet,)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundanes were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By	
namentite Marjorie Neulieb/Julie Fast	
organization	dateSeptember 12,2011
treet&number 414 W. 9th St./318 Lake Street	telephone712-284-1704/712-200-1203
state IA	zip code_51002 ,
Additional Documentation	
A skatch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or num Photographs: Representative black and white photographs of the property. Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)	
Property Owner	
(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)	
name Jackie Castle Anderson	
street & number 857 Windrow Drive	_ telephone
city or nown Saint Paulstate	MN zip code 55109

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement. This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for Isting or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et sec.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information uniess it displays a valid OME control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 nours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C SL, NW, Washington, DC 20240.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 10	Page	_8	Property name	Danish Lutheran Church
			County and State	Buena Vista County, Iowa

10. Geographical Data

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is bounded by the topographic description as follows: Lot 13, Block 9 Alta, Iowa. This is the legal description as recorded at the Buena Vista County Courthouse, Storm Lake, Iowa.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Contains all land historically associated with the church.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section	Photos	Page	9	Pro

Property name ____

e Danish Lutheran Church

County and State Buena Vista County, Iowa

Photographs

Photographs taken by Julie R. Fast, Alta, Iowa on July 8, 2009. Photographs printed by Boyd Fitzgerald Imaging Solutions of Davenport, Iowa.

- 1. View of entire corner lot Church sits on, looking Northeast from across West 4th Street - CD Image 0001, CD Number 181
- 2. View of West side of Church, looking Northeast from Cherokee Street - CD Image 0002, CD Number 181
- View of East side of Church, looking Northwest from east side of lot -CD Image 0003, CD Number 181
- View of Church rear, looking Southeast from Cherokee Street -CD Image 0004, CD Number 181
- View of vestibule (entry area), looking Northwest from front door -CD Image 0005, CD Number 181
- View of inside front of Church, looking North from inside back of Church - CD Image 0006, CD Number 181
- 7. View of inside back of Church, looking South from inside front of Church - CD Image 0007, CD Number 181
- 8. View of ornate ceiling and trim, looking Southwest from inside the Church CD Image 0008, CD Number 182

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Danish Lutheran Church NAME:

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Buena Vista

DATE RECEIVED: 10/07/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/28/11 DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/14/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/22/11 DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000814

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL:	N	DATA PROBLEM:	N	LANDSCAPE:	N	LESS THAN 50 YEARS:	N
OTHER: /	N	PDIL:	N	PERIOD:	N	PROGRAM UNAPPROVED:	N
REQUEST:	N	SAMPLE:	N	SLR DRAFT:	N	NATIONAL:	N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

CCEPT RETURN

1. 18. 11 DATE REJECT

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in The National Register of Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA		
REVIEWER	DISCIPLINE	
TELEPHONE	DATE	

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Danish Lutheran Church Alta III Iowa CD Image 0001



Danish Lutheran Church Alta, Iowa CD Image 0002



Danish Lutheran Church Alta, Iowa CD Image 0003



Oanish Lutheran Church Alta, Jowa CO Image 0004



Danish Lutheran Church Alta, FIJowa CO Image 0005



Danish Lutheran Church Alta, Iowa CO Image 0000000



Danish Lutheran Church Alta, Iowa CO Image 0007



Danish Lutheran Church Alta, Iowa CD Image 0008





TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR KIM REYNOLDS, I.T., GOVERNOR

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T. (515) 281-5111 F. (515) 282-0502

CULTURAL AFFAIRS. ORG

September 29, 2011

Carol Shull, Chief National Park Service National Register of Historic Places 1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8th Floor Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

The following National Register nomination(s) are enclosed for your review and listed if acceptable.

- Danish Lutheran Church, 113 W. 4th Street, Alta, Buena Vista County, Iowa
- Hotel Greenfield, 110 E. Iowa Street, Greenfield, Adair County, Iowa

The following National Register nomination is being resubmitted with photographs.

Jefferson Square Commercial Historic District, Jefferson, Greene County, Iowa

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Faster Hill

Elizabeth Foster Hill, Manager National Register and Tax Incentive Programs