

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0674346

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 7 1979

DATE ENTERED JUN 18 1979

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

Gehlen House and Barn

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

US 52

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

St. Donatus

VICINITY OF
CODE

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

Iowa

COUNTY

Jackson

CODE

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Elizabeth J. and Harold S. Fondell

STREET & NUMBER

Box 30

CITY, TOWN

St. Donatus

VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa 50271

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Jackson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Maquoketa

STATE

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Gehlen (originally Jahlen) house is one of about a dozen large stone houses, built in the late 1850's and early 1860's, which impart a particular character to the small village of St. Donatus. The village is situated on U.S. 52, southeast of Dubuque, in wooded, hilly country typical of northeast Iowa.

The Gehlen house is located at the crossing of the highway and a county road, at the center of the community. It is 2½ stories high, constructed of local limestone which has been plastered on the exterior. The roof is a low-pitched jerkinhead gable, with ridge parallel to the main facade. At the rear is a two story gable-roofed wing, with walk-in basement.

The main facade is broken into seven bays, with entrances in the second, fourth and sixth bays. The southeast end of this facade has modern plate-glass windows and an altered entrance. All other openings of the house feature wood lintels and sills. The side elevations have two 1/1 d.h.s. windows on each floor, and two nearly square windows in the attic story.

In the angle formed by the main block and the rear wing is a recently constructed frame sunporch.

There are two brick chimneys on the main roof, toward the northwest end (another was probably located on the jerkinhead of the southeast end) and one on the rear wing.

The southeast half of the building (including the rear wing) contains a small shop area. Originally, a post office and barroom were also located here. The rest of the building, including the second floor, is divided into numerous rooms of varying sizes (now apartments).

Behind the house is a large barn, constructed of limestone. It is in poor condition, having lost half the gable roof in a storm. Openings vary in size and placement: they include wide entrances on the northeast and southwest sides, and narrow holes for ventilation scattered through the southeast end wall. All openings have wood sills and lintels. The upper floor of the barn is supported by massive hewn timbers.

Also on the property, between the house and barn, is a small garage constructed of clay tile which does not contribute to the significance of the resource.

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

c. 1860

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The village of St. Donatus was originally settled, beginning in the late 1830's, by immigrants from Luzembourg (and until 1870 was known as Tetes Des Mortes). During the late 1850's and early 1860's, these people built simple, yet substantial, side-gable houses of local stone, characterized by long main facades with many windows and doorways, narrow or nonexistent eaves, and, in several instances, by the use of the low-pitched jerkinhead. Some 12 of these houses still remain, imparting to the community a most distinctive character. Of these, the Gehlen house is perhaps the most important. Located at the southeast end of a row of four similar structures, its form and material of construction demonstrate the characteristic features of the village's historic architecture. The building's location in the center of the community reflects its historical importance, as it was once the town's post office, hotel, and general store, serving most of Tetes des Morts' material needs as the two churches, overlooking the village on hills at either end of the valley, served its spiritual wants. The barn, despite its poor condition, has its own significance, as one of the very few stone agricultural structures found in this state.

Both structures were very probably built by Peter Gehlen (Jahlen, on the Abstract), who owned the property from 1857 to 1870. Gehlen came to the area in 1846, and built a flour mill on Tetes des Mortes Creek in 1848 (mill ruins are still visible). During the 1850's, Luxembourg immigrants flowed steadily into the community, and, as they prospered, began to build distinctive houses with the readily-accessible local stone. The "principal building" was Gehlen's big structure at the crossroads, which, with its many activities, functioned as a sort of community center for the village.

Addendum: The stone buildings at St. Donatus are clearly a potential historic district, and we have been collecting information which could lead to such a nomination in the future. The Division of Historic Preservation hopes that listing this house in the Register might stir some community interest in an historic district, although at present local interests seem to be oriented toward providing tract houses for commuters to Dubuque. In a district nomination, the Gehlen property would certainly be a pivotal structure, in its role as the physical and social heart of the Tetes des Mortes community.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Tritz, Sister Mary Cleo. St. Donatus: A Settlement of Luxemburgers in Northeastern Iowa. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1954 (copy on file at SHPO Iowa).
 Thielen, T.T. St. Donatus, Iowa: A Bit of Luxemburg in America. Bellevue (IA) Herald-Leader, 1963.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME La Motte, Iowa

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

House: A	1,5	7,0,2	6,0,0	4,6,9,2	5,4,0	BARN B	1,5	7,0,2	5,7,0	4,6,9,2	5,2,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
C						D					
E						F					
G						H					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 2, Section 7, Tetes des Mortes Township, Jackson Co., Iowa

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

M.H. Bowers, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

April 1979

STREET & NUMBER

26 East Market Street

TELEPHONE

319/353-6949

CITY OR TOWN

Iowa City

STATE

Iowa 52240

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 D. Anderson

TITLE

Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE

5/1/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

William H. Bramham
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

6-18-79

ATTEST: *William H. Bramham*

6-18-79

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION