

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

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

For NPS use only

received **JUL 18 1985**

date entered **AUG 15 1985**

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

1. Name

historic Church of St. Bridget

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number Third Street and Ireland Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town DeGraff N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota code 22 county Swift code 151

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 | <u>N/A</u> 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 Church of St. Bridget

street & number Third Street and Ireland Avenue

city, town DeGraff N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 56233

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Swift County Courthouse

street & number Idaho Avenue and Thirteenth Street

city, town Benson state Minnesota 56215

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Minnesota Statewide Historic

Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983-84 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55111

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 | N/A |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved | date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Church of St. Bridget is located on the south edge of DeGraff, a community of about 180 people in central Swift County. The church is situated in a residential neighborhood and is surrounded by small early twentieth century frame houses to the north and west. South of the church stands the brick St. Bridget's rectory and garage, built in 1937. East of the church is a parking lot.

The Church of St. Bridget was designed by St. Paul architect Edward J. Donahue and constructed by Melrose builder E. C. Richmond in 1901. The Gothic Revival building measures 115' long, 50' wide, and 119' tall and is faced with stretcher bonded red Twin City brick, with a coursed ashlar St. Cloud granite foundation and Kasota limestone trim. The church's design is dominated by a square, 3½ story bell tower at the northeast corner with a crenelated parapet and a polygonal spire topped by a metal cross. South of the tower is the main entrance to the church which consists of two pointed arches with recessed entrance doors, situated beneath a large pointed arched stained glass window with tracery in the main gable end. The five bay sidewalls are lined with pointed arched stained glass windows outlined with brick arches. At the rear of the church is a polygonal apse and a small gabled roof sacristy wing. The building is ornamented with brick and stone buttresses, and stone coping and sills. The church has a gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles and is in good condition. The only apparent exterior alterations have included adding a small brick enclosed entrance to the southwest corner, replacing the roof, re-shingling the spire, installing new entrance doors, and installing protective plastic panels over some of the stained glass windows.

The interior of St. Bridget's is largely intact. The ceiling is covered with pressed metal panels, with wooden beams and large decorative medallions above the center aisle. The sanctuary, defined by an ogee arch, contains a Flamboyant Gothic-inspired oak altar. At the rear of the church is a curving choir loft with oak balustrade, situated above the narthex. The church is furnished with oak pews, two minor altars, an ornate plaster baptismal font, a Gothic-inspired wood confessional, and marble holy water fonts. In 1939 the plaster walls were decorated with large murals which serve as Stations of the Cross and were created by J. James Tissot and E. J. Hartung.

Also standing on the St. Bridget's site is the church rectory, a two story late Colonial Revival style brick house constructed in 1937. West of the rectory stands a small gabled roofed brick garage, probably also built in 1937. North of the church stands a gable roofed, red brick garage, built circa 1950. The rectory and the garage are not considered important to the significance of the church.

8. Significance

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

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------|--------------------------|---|
| Specific dates | 1901 | Builder/Architect | Edward J. Donahue, architect E. C. Richmond, builder |
|-----------------------|------|--------------------------|---|

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Church of St. Bridget is historically significant as a building constructed for the first church parish established by St. Paul Archbishop John Ireland in the first colony founded as part of his extensive western Minnesota Catholic colonization efforts, as the building which represents the tremendous impact of the Catholic church on the settlement and growth of the DeGraff area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and as a continuing symbol of the heavily Irish Catholic makeup of the community. Architecturally, the church's unusually large size for such a tiny community underscores its importance to residents of the area, and its design represents one of the few outstate Minnesota churches known to have been designed by St. Paul architect Edward J. Donahue of the firm Bassford and Donahue.

St. Bridget's parish in DeGraff represents the first efforts of St. Paul Archbishop John Ireland in his nineteenth century Catholic resettlement program which placed 4,000 Catholic families in west central and southwestern Minnesota during the years 1875–1885 and led to the establishment of ten villages in five counties in western Minnesota. Ireland's was the largest and most successful Catholic colonization program in the United States. His involvement with the project began in 1864 when, as a priest in St. Paul, he was appointed president of the Minnesota Irish Emigration Society which was established in St. Paul in 1864 by Bishop Thomas L. Grace. Ireland's goals were to alleviate the perceived problems of nativist prejudice, poverty, and loss of religion faced by urban Catholics (particularly Irish) on the East Coast and poor Catholics still in Ireland by relocating them to low cost farmland in western Minnesota. The plan was supported by the owners and managers of several rail companies which had recently constructed lines in western Minnesota and in particular by James J. Hill, Minnesota's railroad magnate. The state's rail companies had been engaging in colonization efforts of their own in an attempt to profit from land sales in western Minnesota, and saw Ireland's plan as complementary to their own and good publicity for their lines. In January of 1876 Ireland (recently named Co-adjutor Bishop of St. Paul) established the Catholic Colonization Bureau of St. Paul to replace the largely defunct Irish Emigration Society and announced that he had acquired control of 75,000 acres of Hill's St. Paul and Pacific land along the newly constructed line in Swift County on which to begin a pilot colonization project. This was the first of eleven such contracts that Ireland signed with five different rail companies over the next several years.

The land Ireland acquired was sandwiched between another 75,000 acres of government land in Swift County which was also open to homesteaders. Ireland gained complete control of the railroad's portion to prevent speculators from purchasing it and inflating prices. To provide prospective settlers with a trade center and parish church, Ireland established DeGraff, his first colony, in central Swift County. DeGraff had been platted by the St. Paul and Pacific in 1872 but was little more than a railroad platform in 1876 when Ireland acquired control of the site. That year he appointed Father John McDermott as advance man and land agent for the new colony and the St. Paul and Pacific constructed a depot (which also served as the first school) and an immigration house there to handle incoming settlers. Ireland advertised and solicited colonists from the East Coast, but also attracted settlers from Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania. After the spring of 1876 he prohibited Minnesota

9. Major Bibliographical References

Shannon, James P. Catholic Colonization on the Western Frontier. 1957.
 Swift County Historical Society. Swift County, Minnesota. 1978.
Swift County Monitor, December 6, 1901.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property _____ Less than one
 Quadrangle name De Graff Quad. Quadrangle scale 7.5

UTM References

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|---------------|----------------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | <u>15</u> | <u>306300</u> | <u>5014500</u> | B | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| E | | | | F | | | |
| G | | | | H | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 5-7, Block 68, Original Townsite of DeGraff.

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

| | | | | | | | |
|-------|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|------|-----|
| state | N/A | code | N/A | county | N/A | code | N/A |
| state | N/A | code | N/A | county | N/A | code | N/A |

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger, Field Assistant
 organization State Historic Preservation Office
Minnesota Historical Society date November 1984
 street & number Fort Snelling History Center telephone (612) 726-1171
 city or town St. Paul state Minnesota 55111

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.

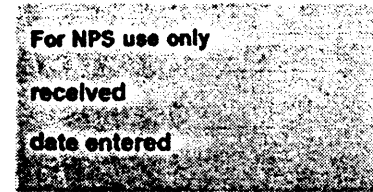
State Historic Preservation Officer signature Russell W. Fridley
 title Russell W. Fridley date 6/27/85
State Historic Preservation Officer

For NPS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
 Entered in the National Register date 8-15-85
for Alvarez Beyer
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____
 Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Church of St. Bridget **Item number** 8 **Page** 1

residents from moving to the colony area to prevent already established farmers from taking advantage of the colony's inexpensive land. Homesteaders who came to the area were advised to come with at least \$400 in cash, a suggestion which prevented most of the targeted poor from participating in the project. Settlers were offered land for as low as \$1.40 an acre, and the local priest/land agent prepared for their arrival by arranging for loans, breaking the first five acres of their land, and arranging for temporary accommodations in the immigration house. After founding DeGraff, Ireland established the colony of Clontarf fourteen miles away in the fall of 1876, and in 1876 built a colony lumberyard in Benson, half way between the two colonies. In 1878 he founded the St. Paul Diocese Industrial School and Orphanage in Clontarf. Ireland moved on to establish similar colonization programs in Nobles, Murray, Big Stone, and Lyon counties.

The first building actually constructed by Ireland in DeGraff was the church, which was built in 1876. By 1878 the colony had seventeen houses, a depot, flour mill, elevator, brickyard, four general stores, two hardware stores, two blacksmith shops, and an immigration house. That year an agent sent by Ireland to inspect the village reported that DeGraff needed a lawyer, machinery dealer, and hotel keeper immediately. Father F. J. Swift, the first resident pastor at DeGraff (1876-1879), generally administered the colony by serving as land agent, keeping all records, supervising the erection of houses for incoming colonists, organizing a short-lived parochial school, offering advice on farming techniques and planting schedules, and ministering to the parish. Life in DeGraff centered around the church. By 1877 the town had a church/community baseball team and in addition to weekly masses parishioners attended monthly fairs, sporting events, and, in 1877, monthly oyster suppers held to raise money for the parish.

The woodframe church erected under Ireland's direction in 1876 served the colony until 1901 when the present church was constructed. At the time the church was built the DeGraff colony contained about 200 people within the city limits, nearly all Catholic and Irish, although Germans and French were also represented. St. Bridget's has continued to serve as the center of religious and social life for the DeGraff area since then and is the only church in DeGraff. Today, the parish numbers about one hundred families and is comprised of most of the residents of DeGraff (present population about 180) and farmers from the surrounding area. The DeGraff area is still heavily Irish Catholic in ethnic make up, and the nearby townships of Cashel, Kildare, Dublin, Clontarf, and Tara also contain large percentages of Irish Catholic families.

St. Bridget's was designed by St. Paul architect Edward J. Donahue and constructed by Melrose builder E. C. Richmond. Donahue was a talented St. Paul architect who worked for prominent St. Paul architect Edward P. Bassford from at least circa 1886-1896 before becoming Bassford's junior partner in the firm Bassford and Donahue. Donahue designed St. Paul's Ramsey County Jail (1903), at least three Catholic schools, an addition to St. Andrew's Catholic Church (1908), and a number of residences and commercial buildings in the Twin Cities. He also designed the Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Graceville, Minnesota, which was built in 1897.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

**Note: These changes apply to
Church of St. Bridget in Swift
County, Minnesota.**

REFERENCE NUMBER: 85001768

STATE: MINNESOTA

COUNTY: Swift

RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC): Church of St. Bridget (Catholic)

CITY:

VICINITY OF:

ADDRESS:

CERTIFICATION DATE:

REMOVED DATE:

COMMENTS:

Nina M. Archabal

Nina M. Archabal
State Historic Preservation Officer

JUN 17 1988

Date