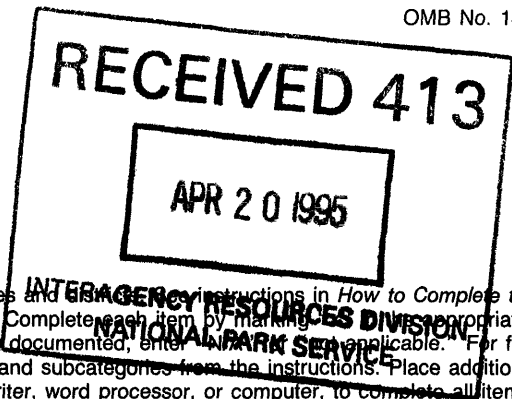


617

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See the instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking an appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" where applicable. For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.



1. Name of Property

historic name Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala Forsamlingen

other names/site number Christdala Evangelical Swedish Lutheran Church

2. Location

street & number 4695 Millersburg Road  not for publication N/A

city or town Forest Twp., Lonsdale  vicinity

state Minnesota code MN county Rice code 131 zip code 55046

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ian R. Stewart 4/6/95  
Signature of certifying official/Title Ian R. Stewart Date  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State of Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Edson B. Beall Entered in the National Register. 5.18.95 Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)  
**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious facility  
 Funerary: cemetery

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: museum  
 Funerary: cemetery

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th century revivals:  
 Late Gothic Revival

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: limestone  
 walls Wood: weatherboard  
 roof Wood: shingle  
 other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets, pages 1-3

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

- A** 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 yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage: European  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1878-1918  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1878  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Olson, John, Builder  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite 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 67) 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:**

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

Name of repository:

Gustavus Adolphus College  
Church Archives Department  
St. Peter, MN 56082

Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala Forsamlingen Rice Co., Minnesota  
Name of Property County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.125 acres

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.) Little Chicago, Minn. 1960

1 

1	5
---	---

4	7	1	5	6	5
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	9	1	9	8	2	5
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

  
Zone Easting Northing

3 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

  
Zone Easting Northing

2 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

4 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title B. Wayne Quist

organization N/A date April 25, 1994

street & number 228 South Second Street telephone 612-665-2763

city or town Le Sueur state MN zip code 56058

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Christdala Swedish Lutheran Church Preservation Association

street & number 3400 122nd Street West telephone 507-645-8086

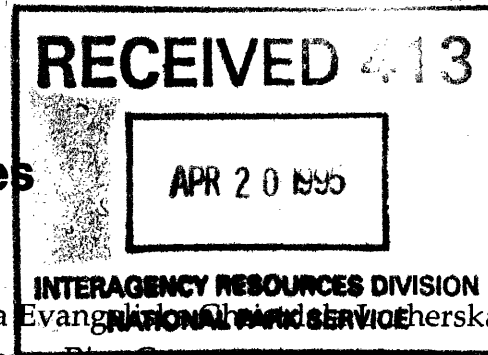
city or town Faribault state MN zip code 56021

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing 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 seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet



Section number 7 Page 1 Den Svenska Evangeliska Kyrkans församling, Rice Co., MN

### 7. Narrative Description

The Christdala Evangelical Swedish Lutheran Church and cemetery are located in southern Minnesota on County Highway One, 1.8 miles west of Millersburg, in section nine of Forest Township in rural Rice County. Architecturally, the church is an extant example of late Gothic Revival design. It is symmetrical in plan and style and is representative of small, wood-frame, country churches found in the Småland, Blekinge and Skåne provinces of Sweden.

The Christdala Church and cemetery are prominently situated on 1.125 acres of land on a hill that overlooks Circle Lake to the south. The tree-lined cemetery surrounds the church on all sides and dates to the late 1870s. The cemetery is enclosed by a wire fence and is lined predominantly with granite and concrete grave markers. The church is conspicuous in its imposing rural setting and is situated in the middle of the southern (front) third of the property. The building is original and has never been moved or modified and it has retained its historical integrity intact. The church, cemetery, and surrounding property are easily accessible and highly visible to motorists passing by on Rice County Highway One.

The Christdala congregation was formed on July 18, 1877 by the first Swedish immigrants who settled in Rice County and Forest Township. The land was donated to the congregation by Peter Youngquist and Carl Hirdler, two early settlers who owned adjacent farms. John Johnson grubbed the stumps and cleared the lot which measures 165 feet wide (east-west) and 297 feet deep (north-south). The church was constructed by local workmen during the summer of 1878 using native oak, elm and maple hardwoods from the nearby forest that the early Swedish settlers called the "Great Woods." All of Forest Township was, in fact, a great forest at the time. The finishing carpentry work was completed by John Olson of Northfield at a cost of \$145.00 and by 1880 the church was insured for \$600.00. <sup>1</sup>

The Christdala Church is a one-story rectangular wood frame structure that measures 24.5 feet by 54.5 feet from the south end of the narthex to the north end of the chancel area. The church consists of one large room for the nave and chancel area that together measure 24 feet by 43 feet, plus a narthex that measures 10.5 by 10.5 feet. The nave is rectangular and measures 24 feet by 36 feet while the chancel is trapezoidal, measuring 10 feet wide in the front, 8 feet deep, and 8 feet wide in the rear of the chancel. The entire building rests on a native limestone foundation. The

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

stone was taken from the nearby Cleland quarry just west of Union Lake. <sup>2</sup> The building has a simple, moderately steep, gabled roof with wood shingles, and it is capped with a 60-foot belfry tower and tapered steeple, spire and cross that were added in 1901.

The interior of the church is primarily illuminated by six blunt-arched, simple-tracery, double-hung windows, three on either side of the nave. Two additional double-hung, blunt-arched, simple tracery windows illuminate the area around the recessed chancel and altar. An arched, multi-colored transom light over the main entrance door and a double-hung arched window illuminate the narthex. Four blunt-arched, slatted windows illuminate and ventilate the belfry tower and steeple area immediately above the narthex. The interior walls of the church are twelve feet high with hand-fashioned native interior oak studdings that measure fourteen feet. The tapered ceiling reaches a maximum height of 22 feet at the top of the inside arch.

The church has a 4.5 by 7-foot wood plank, transommed, arched, double-main entrance door that leads into the narthex on the south end of the building. The entrance doors from the narthex into the nave measure eight feet high and four feet wide. Access to the basement is through an outside door on the east side of the building. The doors and windows were constructed in Minneapolis and transported to Millersburg from the Dundas railroad depot using Peter Youngquist's mules.

A single corbelled chimney extends upward along the north side of the church. The building was originally heated using a fireplace in the basement that was designed to accommodate four-foot logs, with open floor slats to permit circulation of warm air into the nave. The head of each family was required to furnish one cord of basswood each year for heating. The floor slats were covered in 1917 when a new wood-burning furnace and hot air registers were installed in the basement. The wood-burning stove remains in the basement but the building is now heated with a gas furnace that was installed in the 1960s.

With few, minor exceptions the exterior and interior of the church are original and unmodified. The outside walls are sheathed in native oak clapboard painted white. The interior walls were plastered in 1880, two coats from the top of the three-foot, natural finished, native ash wainscotting up to and including the ceiling, and one coat under the wainscot which extends around the nave.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

The original interior white-washed plaster walls are in excellent condition. Interior oil lamps and the organ were acquired in 1880. The oil lamps were replaced with four electric chandeliers that currently hang from the ceiling. The organ was purchased from the Wick Organ Company in Chicago and is still in good operating condition. The hand crafted pulpit and altar are original and unmodified. They were constructed in 1880 at a cost of \$15.00 by the same John Olson who performed the original carpentry work on the church. The front steps were built in 1881 when the congregation purchased the table, chairs and baptismal font that remain in the church today. In 1881, members were permitted to erect horse stalls on the north line (rear) of the church property. In 1884 a donation of \$100.00 was pledged toward the purchase of the church bell which was eventually installed in the belfry in 1901. In 1892 the Mission Society purchased carpet for the chancel and in 1893 window shades and burial equipment were acquired. In 1917 the original hand-fashioned kneeling benches which were used in the early years were replaced with the more modern existing oak pews.<sup>3</sup> There are currently eighteen identical 7.5-foot pews in the church, nine on each side of the center aisle.

The simple and elegant craftsmanship of the interior fixtures exhibit the exceptional talents and tasteful standards of the early Swedish immigrants who founded the congregation and built the church. The Christdala Evangelical Swedish Lutheran Church west of Millersburg is a distinctive structure that represents the permanent contributions made by the first Swedish immigrants to the history of Rice County and Forest Township. Its balanced proportion, sturdy workmanship throughout, and complete historical integrity reflect a uniquely Swedish character and pioneer heritage.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

**8. Narrative Statement of Significance**

Summary Statement

The Christdala Evangelical Swedish Lutheran Church of rural Millersburg, MN is eligible for the National Register in the area of European Ethnic Heritage under National Register Criterion A. While religious properties are ordinarily not eligible for the National Register, the Christdala Church meets the requirements of National Register Criterion A because it stands as the only remaining symbol of the broad impact of the Swedish Lutheran Church on the Millersburg community and because its presence demonstrates the importance of the church in the social and cultural history of the township, county, and state. The property relates to the statewide historic context entitled "Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940."

The period of significance for the property is 1878-1918 which corresponds to the high-point of Swedish immigration into the United States and into Goodhue and Rice counties in southern Minnesota. Built in 1878, the Christdala Church is historically significant as a singular, extant and venerated symbol of the first Swedish farming community in Rice County.

For nearly a century the church and its congregation symbolized and embodied the religious, cultural, social and community activities of the Swedish settlement near Millersburg. The church continues to serve as an enduring and lasting historical reminder of the importance of ethnic communities such as Christdala to the history of Minnesota's substantial rural Swedish immigrant population of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Swedish-American Settlement

Between 1840 and 1930, nearly 1.3 million Swedish immigrants settled in the United States, mostly in Minnesota. They made many lasting and significant contributions to the nation, bringing with them their language, religion, and culture which became intermingled with and influenced the broader, developing American culture of the period. 4

Until 1851, European settlements in the Upper Midwest were located primarily east of the Mississippi River except for Fort Snelling and a few trading posts and



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

missions. Land west of the river was opened for settlement by the U. S. Government in the early 1850s. By 1853 Red Wing had been established in Goodhue County at the north end of Lake Pepin near where the Cannon River flows into the Mississippi. In the period just prior to the American Civil War, Swedish immigrants settled in communities near the Mississippi River such as Red Wing, Vasa and La Crosse, Wisconsin. These communities became debarkation points for the early Swedish settlers who pushed west into southern Minnesota. <sup>5</sup>

Vasa was an active Swedish community 12 miles west of Red Wing. This settlement was founded by an early Swedish immigrant, Hans Mattson, who initially settled in Red Wing. By 1870, Vasa was 90% Swedish and had become a symbol of Swedish life in America as a place where Swedish immigrants were making significant contributions to the civic and religious life of the community. For example, Hans Mattson studied law in Red Wing and became city clerk in 1858 and later county auditor. Mattson was a well known promoter of Swedish immigration to Minnesota. He went on to distinguish himself as a colonel commanding a Scandinavian regiment in the Civil War and after the war served as Minnesota Secretary of State and U. S. Consul-General to India. <sup>6</sup>

The Christdala Church had many lasting ties to the Vasa settlement because the early Swedish immigrants who founded Christdala had initially settled in Vasa prior to pushing westward into the "Big Woods" of Rice County in the early 1870s. Establishment of a church and school like they knew in Vasa and in Sweden were fundamental goals to promote and retain their language, culture and beliefs when they first arrived in Millersburg.

The Christdala congregation was established while the rich land was still being cleared through strenuous and time-consuming manual labor. Once cleared, however, the land brought exceptional results. In 1879 Rice County took first prize for the world's best wheat at the international agricultural exhibition in Liverpool, England.

#### Founding of Millersburg

The first European settlement in the Millersburg area began in 1859 with English-speaking Yankee-American settlers from the eastern United States. One of the earliest settlers was George W. Miller who homesteaded the land on which Millersburg was built. Miller platted a village on this land and recorded it as

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 6 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

Millersburg. He erected a mill and a hotel and an associate established a general store, post office and blacksmith shop.<sup>7</sup>

By the early 1870s, a small Swedish settlement had been established in the dense forest of Forest Township two miles west of Millersburg near the former Lester post office. The first Swedish settlers in the community, Peter Ljungquist (Youngquist) and Christian Lundstrom, arrived in Millersburg in 1870. They were soon followed by six additional families.<sup>8</sup> They located close to each other and near the present day church. The community provided mutual support to its members, utilizing the adaptable, Old-world skills that they learned in Sweden as craftsmen, artisans and farmers. A business card of one of the early settlers stated: "Notary Public, Justice of the Peace, Real Estate Developer, Member of the Minnesota State Legislature, Postmaster."

Early settlers recalled that the native trees in this part of the Rice County "Big Woods" were so thick and tall that, when standing in the forest, the sky was not visible to them during the day.<sup>9</sup> It was in this setting that the first members of the Christdala congregation built their log homes and began the hard and arduous task of clearing the land and grubbing the stumps.

After building their log houses and clearing enough land to initially survive, these early Swedish settlers resolved to establish a church nearby. Letters and stories tell of their sadness in leaving their homes, parents, brothers, sisters, and their way of life in Sweden. Before they established Christdala, it was not uncommon for them to walk fifteen miles to attend church services at the Norwegian settlements in Trondhjem and Webster. This longing for home and the religious life that they left behind in Sweden resulted in the establishment of the Christdala Church. Prior to their departure from Sweden, several religious revivals had swept through Sweden. The early Swedish settlers who founded Christdala brought with them books and pamphlets from that movement which was a motivating force in the establishment of a church in their new community.

#### Founding of the Christdala Church

By the mid 1870s, more than a dozen Swedish families lived in the vicinity of the present day Christdala Church. The Christdala congregation was formally organized with a total of 13 families as its first members on July 18, 1877 after Sunday services at the home of A. P. Johnson. Each founding member desired to

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 7 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

name the new church after their home congregation in Sweden. A compromise on the name "Christdala" (Christ valley in English) was made in favor of the broad and open expanse that still runs between the church and Circle Lake. The following year, in 1878, the Christdala congregation was formally recognized and accepted into the Minnesota Conference of the Skandinaviska Evangeliska Lutherska Augustana Synod. Soon, more than 50 Swedish families were located between Lester and Millersburg and were members of the congregation. By 1882, 70 families were members of the church and average Sunday attendance for the two services was 170 people. The church was incorporated in 1885 and adopted its constitution at the same time. <sup>10</sup>

The church records have the following entry for January 2, 1892: "All debts have been paid and there is a balance of \$147.14 in the treasury." In less than fifteen years the Christdala Swedes had built, furnished and painted the church, and had established the most active Swedish Lutheran congregation within 40 miles.

However, pioneer life had many burdens. A survey of the early tombstones in the church cemetery reflects the tragedies that frequently struck early pioneer settlements. Outbreaks of diphtheria, typhus and whooping cough took a great toll on infants and young adults during the early years of the church.

Other tragedies were also faced. Nicholas Gustafson was one of the earliest Swedish settlers in the community. He was mortally wounded on September 7, 1876 by the James-Younger gang during the aborted Northfield bank robbery. Gustafson's death was the first for the community and as a result the Swedish settlement immediately resolved to acquire land and establish a church and cemetery. <sup>11</sup>

#### Social and Ethnic Significance of Christdala

The residents of Millersburg and its business community were predominantly Yankee American. The Christdala settlement was located two miles west of Millersburg and, as a minority culture in the greater Millersburg community, the Christdala Swedes developed and maintained strong self-identification through their language, mores, culture and architecture. Their foreign birth and language set them apart from mainstream America which had already taken root in nearby Millersburg, Dundas and Northfield as well as throughout most of the county. Census records and early histories of Rice County indicate that in 1880 fewer than 2% of the population of the county was foreign born Swedish, and of these, nearly

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 8 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

all resided within the Christdala settlement.<sup>12</sup> Other ethnic groups were also represented in the area around Christdala as indicated by the notes of an early resident: "West of Millersburg we have Irish, French and Bohemian settlements, Norwegians to the north and Germans to the south. All good neighbors."<sup>13</sup>

Railroads bypassed Millersburg, causing even greater isolation for the Swedish settlers. To the east, Dundas and Northfield were linked by rail in the early 1870s and five miles to the west of Christdala, a rail line was established in 1900 creating the Village of Lonsdale. Though isolated geographically, culturally and linguistically, the Christdala Swedish community became a part of the greater society through active participation in educational, political and social activities at the township, county and state levels. Members of the community became town officials and postmasters and were elected to the State Legislature. The early church records reflect their strong belief in representative democracy as well as a need to share responsibilities for the mutual welfare of all members of the community.<sup>14</sup>

Many of the early pioneers left parents and other loved ones behind in Sweden. These factors led to a solid and continuing identification with the Swedish Lutheran Church on the part of the immigrants. The church provided a link to their Swedish roots and served as a strong stabilizing influence in their lives.

The Christdala Church hosted weekly church and local community events, particularly from 1878 to 1918. The church was the social hub of the community and served as the host for nearly every type of religious and secular meeting. The local Millersburg chapter of the Dorcas Society met at the church weekly, along with various other benevolent organizations that served to promote the ethnic Swedish identities of the members. The Kvinneföreningen (Ladies' Aid Society), Women's Missionary Society and Young People's Society were active organizations within the church that fostered unity and purpose within the community. The cultural role played by the Christdala Church was a vitally important element in the cohesiveness of this pioneer Swedish community. Families were often measured by the gifts, contributions and participation each made to the church and its various religious, cultural and social activities.

The church and its social environment were particularly important to the immigrant women whose lives were otherwise dominated by hard physical labor and frequent childbearing. The women in the congregation were strong promoters of education and Swedish culture and they were the first teachers. The church's role

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 9 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

in maintaining the cultural identity of its members became even more important as the number of American-born children grew, creating a need for schooling in the heritage of their Swedish background. The church provided Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Confirmation School and Mission Meetings for the young people of the community. There was also weekly instruction in the Swedish language at the church for all first generation children born in the United States.

A Church resolution dated January 2, 1890 states: "Resolved that all children know their ABCs before they attend school." These early Swedish settlers had a high regard for education and they brought many books with them from Sweden. Church records indicate that in 1885 over 55% of the annual Christdala budget was dedicated to education. They were also active supporters of higher education, as evidenced by their support in the establishment of religiously affiliated schools such as Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter and the Augustana Seminary in Rock Island, Illinois. <sup>15</sup>

While these early settlers maintained their ethnicity through their Swedish language, culture and institutions, they also demonstrated a strong desire to fully assimilate into the evolving and more dominant, mainstream English-speaking American culture. By 1903, English services were offered once a month on Sunday afternoons at the Christdala Church in recognition of the growing use and dominance of the English language. Gradually, the community became amalgamated into the broader, mainstream English-speaking society and by World War I the Swedish language was no longer used in church activities.

#### Decline in Church Membership

The church reached peak membership during the forty-year period from 1878 until about 1918. Church membership decreased from its maximum of 230 members in 1890 to fewer than 100 members by 1918, because a majority of the young people, once educated, left their farms in search of other opportunities in the Twin Cities and surrounding communities. Because of their high regard for education, the Swedish communities in the United States were among the quickest to totally assimilate into the greater American cultural landscape. <sup>16</sup> It is ironic to note that, in so doing, they gradually left little or no trace of their early U. S. origins except for those few country churches like Christdala that are still standing intact.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 10 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

By 1938 fewer than six of the first pioneer settlers remained in the community and most of their descendants had moved elsewhere. By 1950 there were only thirty members of the congregation. The congregation dwindled to twenty-two aging members in 1960 and eventually services were terminated. The congregation was disbanded on August 21, 1966 and the church records were placed in the archives at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. Only one family of Swedish descent currently resides in the area. Reunions of friends of the church and their families have been held in 1979, 1982 and 1986, attracting over 100 people from several states at each of the reunions. Church membership from 1878, when the church was built, until the congregation disbanded in 1966 is shown below.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>MEMBERSHIP</u>	<u>PASTOR</u>
1878	50	A. Wahlin/A. Anderson
1880	163	Svante Anderson
1890	230	J.J.Froden/C.M.Ryden
1900	207	L. A. Edman
1910	152	L. A. Edman
1920	81	E. Norsen
1930	43	J. E. Oslund/J. Moody
1940	30	A. F. Seastrand
1950	30	O. Birger Nelson
1960	22	A. L. Chell
1966 (Disbanded)	18	A. L. Chell

Concluding Statement

The Christdala Church is a monument and a memorial to the contributions that early Swedish settlers made to the cultural and social history of the local community. It is a symbol of their dedication, piety, hard work, and skill. Its members made significant and lasting contributions to the foundations of today's society and way of life in Minnesota and Rice County. Members of the Church served in the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II and in the Korean War. Others became farmers, teachers, clergymen, businessmen, lawyers, judges and politicians. The immigrants who founded Christdala and the first Swedish settlement in Rice County contributed directly and significantly to the broad patterns of the history of Minnesota and the history of the United States.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

FOOTNOTES

1 Christdala Swedish Lutheran Church, *Official Records and Historical File, 1878-1966* (St. Peter: Gustavus Adolphus College, Church Archives Department).

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 John G. Rice, "The Swedes", in Holmquist, June D., ed., *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 248.

5 Ibid, 252.

6 Hans Mattson, *Reminiscences: The Story of an Emigrant* (St. Paul: D. D. Merrill Company, 1891), 55-56.

7 Edward D. Neill, *History of Rice County* (Faribault: Rice County Historical Society, 1882), 118.

8 Christdala Swedish Lutheran Church, *Official Records and Historical File, 1878-1966* (St. Peter: Gustavus Adolphus College, Church Archives Department).

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Nicholas Gustafson was in Northfield with some of his neighbors on September 7, 1876 and was purchasing supplies near the bank when the shooting started. Peter Youngquist, one of the donors of the land on which the Church was built, owned the only span of mules in the Swedish settlement and had driven several of his neighbors to Northfield on the morning of the attempted robbery. Nicholas Gustafson, like most of the Swedish immigrants, did not understand spoken English and was shot by Cole Younger for failing to obey the orders of one of the gang members. Later in the day of the attempted robbery, the surviving gang members made their escape through Millersburg and the Swedish settlement. As they passed through the community they were recognized by the owner of the Cushman Hotel where they had stayed the night before the robbery. Lacking a church at this time, the Swedish community held meetings at the Peter Gustafson farm (brother of Nicholas) to share news and mourn the loss of Nicholas Gustafson. Gustafson's death became the defining event that moved the Swedish community to establish the Christdala Church and cemetery.

12 Rice County Historical Society, *History of Rice and Steele Counties, Volume I* (Faribault: Rice County Historical Society, 1910), 212; John G. Rice, "The Swedes", in Holmquist, June D., ed., *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 256-257.

13 Christdala Swedish Lutheran Church, *Official Records and Historical File, 1878-1966*, (St. Peter: Gustavus Adolphus College, Church Archives Department).

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 12 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Beijbom, Ulf. Swedes in America: New Perspectives. Växjö, Sweden: Davidson Tryckeri AB, 1993.

Christdala Swedish Lutheran Church. Official Records and Historical File 1878-1966. St Peter: Gustavus Adolphus College, Church Archives Department.

Clark, Clifford E., ed. Minnesota in a Century of Change. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989.

Furtenbach, Borg. Släktforskning för Alla. Västerås, Sweden: ICA Bökförlag, 1986.

Gowans, Alan. Styles and Types of North American Architecture: Social Function and Cultural Expression. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Hasselmo, Nils. Swedish America: An Introduction. Minneapolis: Bring's Press, 1976.

Holmquist, June D., ed. They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups. Chapter 12, "The Swedes" by John G. Rice. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981.

Johnson, Amandus. The Swedes in America. Philadelphia: The Lenape Press, 1914.

Johnson, Chester. Interview with Author. St. Peter: Gustavus Adolphus College, Archives Department, April 6, 1994.

Johnson, Emeroy. God Gave the Growth: the Story of the Lutheran Minnesota Conference 1876-1958. Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, 1958: p.130-131; p. 140-143.

Karlisch, Marita. Interview with Author. Minneapolis: American Swedish Institute, April 4, 1994.

Kastrup, Allan. The Swedish Heritage in America. St. Paul, Swedish Council of America, 1975.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 13 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

Kindem, Lars G. Translation of Christdala Swedish Records. St. Peter: Gustavus Adolphus College, April 7, 1994.

Lund, Emil. Minnesota-Konferensens av Augustana-Synoden och dess Forsamlingars Historia. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1926.

Lutheran Minnesota Conference of the Augustana Synod. Minutes of the Eighty-Second Annual Convention held in St. Paul's Lutheran Church April 2-7, 1940. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1940.

Mattson, Hans. Reminiscences: The Story of an Emigrant. St. Paul: D. D. Merrill Company, 1891.

Minnesota Conference of the Augustana Synod. Minutes of Annual Conventions. St. Paul: D. D. Merrill Company, 1877-1966.

Neill, Edward D. History of Rice County. Faribault: Rice County Historical Society, 1882.

Nelson, Mrs. Thomas. Letters of Pioneers. Faribault: Rice County Historical Society, November, 15, 1938.

Nordstrom, Byron, Dr. Interview with Author. St. Peter: Gustavus Adolphus College, History Department, April 6, 1994.

Rice County Historical Society. History of Rice and Steele Counties, Volume I. Faribault: Rice County Historical Society, 1910.

Rice County Recorder. Abstract of Deeds Book 48. Faribault: Rice County Court House, February 5, 1878.

Swedish Emigrant Institute. Correspondence. S-351 04 Växjö 1, Sweden, 1994.

Wittman, Elizabeth. Letter to Author. Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Chief Archivist, March 30, 1994.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 14 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice, Co., MN

---

## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the solid black line on the accompanying map entitled "Christdala Swedish Lutheran Church."

The boundary of the Christdala Church property is established in the records of the Office of the County Recorder, Rice County Court House, Faribault, Minnesota, 56021, Book 48, pages 365-367 as follows:

(1) Carl B. Hirdler's grant: *"Beginning at the Southwest corner of the Northeast one-fourth of the Southwest one-fourth of Section 9, thence running 5 rods East, thence North 18 rods, thence 5 rods West, thence 18 rods South to the place of beginning, containing 90 Rods."*

(2) Petter Youngquist's grant: *"Beginning at the South East corner of the North West one-fourth of the South West one-fourth of Section 9 running West 5 rods, thence North 18 rods, thence East 5 rods, thence South 18 rods to the place of beginning, containing 90 rods."*

The total grant was 90 rods from each donor for a total of 180 rods or 1.125 (one and one eighth) acres. Rice County Highway Number One runs in an east-west direction directly in front of the south side of the Christdala Church property which has a roadway front of 10 rods, or 165 feet, along the north side of the Highway One right-of-way. The west side of the Christdala property is marked by the existing driveway, legally described as "Benson's Cartway" in Court records on file in the Rice County Court House. The Church property extends 18 rods from Highway One directly north along Benson's Cartway for a total of 18 rods, or 297 feet. The east side and north side are also 297 feet and 165 feet, respectively. The entire property measures 165 feet by 297 feet for a total of 49,005 square feet.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property includes the parcel of land that is historically associated with the Church and its surrounding cemetery (a total of 1.125 acres or 49,005 square feet that measures 10 rods by 18 rods or 165 feet by 297 feet).

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 15 Den Svenska Evangeliska Lutherska Christdala  
Forsamlingen, Rice Co., MN

---

Legal description of the property is on file at the Office of the County Recorder, Rice County Court House, Faribault, Minnesota. The property is located in the middle of the southwest quarter of section nine of Forest Township (Township 111, Range 21 West, Rice County, State of Minnesota)

Three maps are included: (1) Sketch Map of Christdala Property, 1994; (2) Rice County Atlas of Forest Township, Minnesota, 1992; (3) U. S. Geological Survey Map, "Little Chicago Quadrangle", 7.5 Minute Series, (Topographic), N4422.5-W9315/7.5, 1960.

CHRISTDALA SWEDISH LUTHERAN CHURCH  
4695 MILLERSBURG BOULEVARD  
LONSDALE MN 55046



Christdala Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Rice, MN

BENSON CARTWAY

CEMETERY

297'



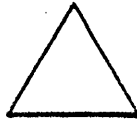
CHURCH

24.5' x 54.5'

165'

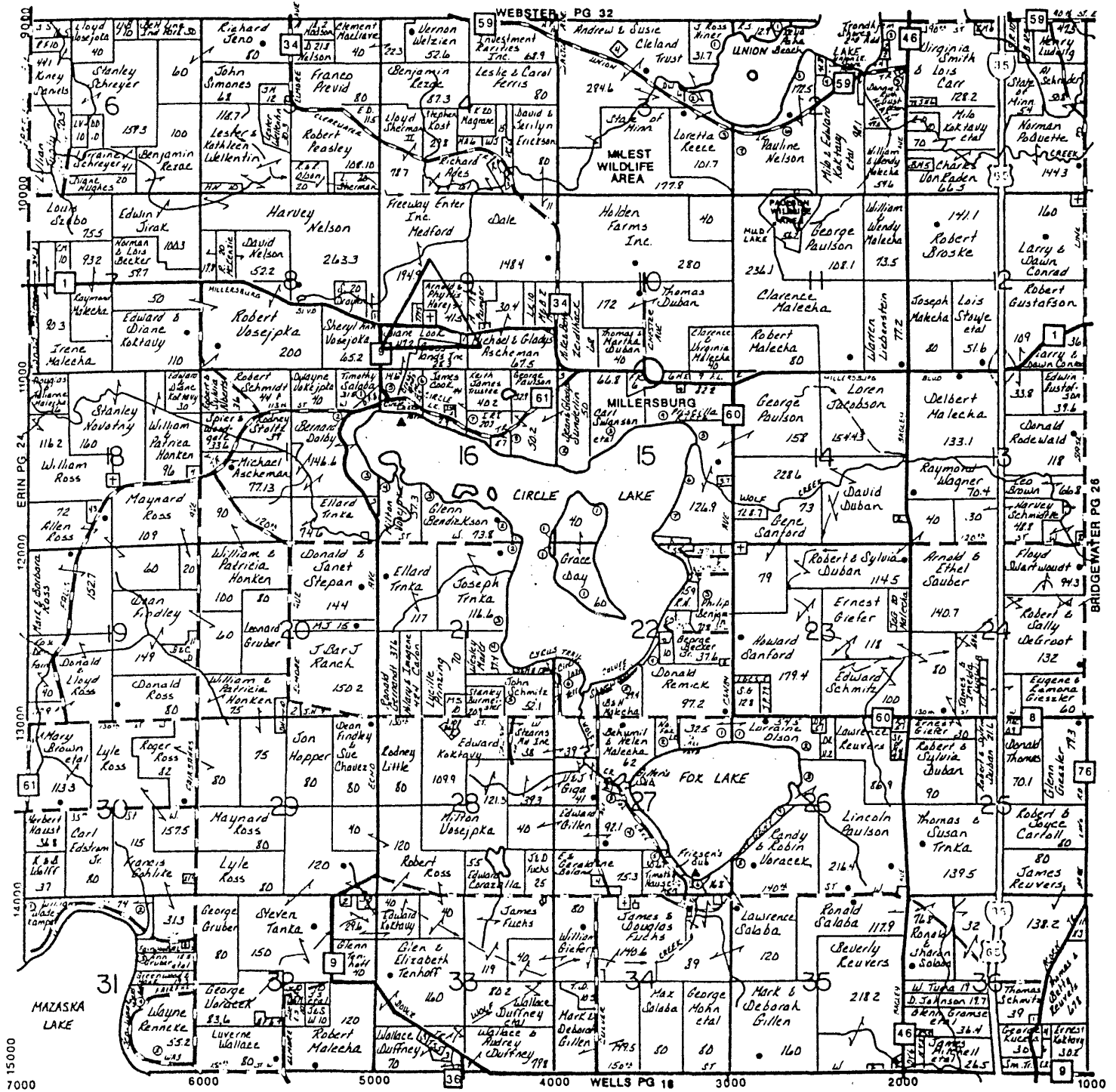
RICE COUNTY NO. 1  
"MILLERSBURG BOULEVARD"

SCALE 1" = 40'



# FOREST

# T.111N. - R.21W.



Rice County Atlas of Forest Township, 1992