

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0693421

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**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

Keystone Community Church

AND/OR COMMON

"The Little Church"

(KH02-1)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

McGinley Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Keystone

VICINITY OF

3rd

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Nebraska

31

Keith

101

**3 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:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Board of Trustees, Keystone Church ✓

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Keystone

VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds, Keith County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Ogallala

STATE

Nebraska

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Community Church at Keystone, Nebraska is a one story board and batten structure measuring just 9.8 by 3.9 meters. Apses protrude from both ends of the building creating space for a Catholic altar at the north and a Protestant lectern at the south. A small confessional is located at the Catholic end of the nave. Entrance is gained through the west side of the building into the center of the nave plan. This unusual church, which will seat about seventy people, is furnished with pews manufactured by an Illinois streetcar company. The backs of the pews are hinged (see photo #9) so that the seating can be reversed to accommodate the members of whichever faith is using it at the time. There is no electricity in the building which is heated by a wood-burning stove set in a small alcove opposite the door. The only interior alterations include the replacement of the plaster ceiling and the presumed removal of the diamond-paned casement windows on the east.

The exterior remains virtually unaltered. The structure sets on its original concrete foundation just a few centimeters above grade. The simple rectangular building is articulated in form by the five-bay apses at each ? gable end and by the outshot for the stove flue on the east which is balanced by the braced porch over the west door. A small shingled lantern rests atop the roof over the center of the building from which a cross rises which informs of the building type. Some sophistication of detail is evident in the trefoil battens and in the careful placement of door and windows within the batten pattern. A subtle watertable is provided at the base of the battens. Additionally, the carefully detailed porch braces with their pilasters flanking the door, the simple wood porch railing and the diamond-paned sash contribute to the over-all character of the architecture.

The last regular services at the Keystone Community Church were conducted by the Lutherans in June of 1949. The church remained unoccupied until about 1953 when the Keystone Extension Club took an interest in preserving and maintaining the structure. Since that time hundreds of visitors have stopped at the "Little Church" each year.

The church can presently be reserved for weddings, baptisms, etc. upon request. The building is still cared for voluntarily by local residents and the Keystone Extension Club, and is supported by donations.

# 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 checked="" 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 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 checked="" 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      1908                                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Ed Casey

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Keystone Community Church was the inspiration of Mrs. Bill Paxton, Jr., the wife of a wealthy rancher, and the "King's Daughters", a teenage girls club similar to our present 4-H clubs.

This small unincorporated village in Nebraska's ranch country was without a house of worship until the erection of this "Little Church." The nearest church was located fifteen miles south in Ogallala and was inaccessible most of the time due to the need to cross the mile-wide, bridgeless North Platte River.

In 1907-08, the "King's Daughters" raised \$300 with money-making projects and another \$715 through donations. Mr. and Mrs. Paxton gave the remainder of the money needed to build the \$1200 structure.

Due to the diverse faiths of the Keystone residents, it was decided to build a church which could accomodate both Protestant and Catholic religions. Special dispensation was given by Pope Lea XIII to allow dual faiths in the church which was dedicated August 16, 1908.

In 1916 a one-way bridge was built across the North Platte River which made travel to Ogallala possible. Even so, members of the Catholic faith used the church until October of 1929. The last regular Protestant service was held in June of 1949.

This church is the only known combined Catholic and Protestant church in Nebraska and is one of what may be a very few such structures in the United States. It is significant in that it is a symbol of the religious drive of the settlers in the remote Sandhills of Nebraska. They were able to deal with the North Platte River obstacle in a positive way by building their own church. The problem of a community of many faiths, with an economic base sufficient enough to build only one church, did not stop this community and the "King's Daughters" from achieving their dream.

Architecturally the church is a modest example of vernacular spiritual architecture. Constructed by carpenter-builder Ed Casey of Red Oak, Iowa, the building suggests possible influences from builder's manuals. Significant is the modification of the basic one-room, gable end opening schoolhouse, meeting hall or church plan to accomodate the special needs of two congregations in the same building. Due to the need for two altars, the conventional plan of providing the entrance in the gable end of the structure was modified to allow for an entrance in the side. The resultant symmetry proclaimed the architectural equality of the two altars and produced not only a unique but an architecturally distinguished church.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wendt, Mrs. Willard, unpublished manuscript dealing with the history of the  
Keystone Community Church, ca. 1960's, Keystone, Nebraska.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Keystone

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 14 283360 4565900

B         

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Block 2 Original plat of Keystone, lots 16 and 17

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Janet Jeffries Spencer, Cultural Historian; D. Murphy, Architect

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Nebraska State Historical Society

December, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1500 R Street

402/432-2793

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Lincoln

Nebraska

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

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

*Marion E. Knott*

12/5/78

TITLE

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*for Charles A. Murray*

DATE 1-25-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: *William H. Abraham*

DATE 1-22-79

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION