

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



FREE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Continuation sheet Historic Resources-Ephraim Item number 1 Page 1

1. NAME

Historic Name: Free Evangelical Lutheran Church - Bethania Scandinavian
(NRHP Name) Evangelical Lutheran Congregation.

Common Name: Bethany Lutheran Church.

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

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 9/30/86

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

ja Beth Grosvenor

Keeper of the National Register

date 1/4/86

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

INVENTORY FORM FOR NOMINATED PROPERTIES

Name of property: The Free Evangelical Lutheran Church

Owner: The Free Evangelical Lutheran Church

Address: 3028 Church Street

Owner's address: 3028 Church Street

City: Ephraim County: Door

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

160 NRHP Certification (date) _____
Listed in NRHP (LI) _____
Determined eligible in DOE process (DD) _____
Determined eligible in nomination process (DN) _____
Additional documentation added to nomination (AD) _____
Boundary Increased (BI) _____
Boundary Decreased (BD) _____
Delisted (DL) _____

215 Criteria Considerations
 religious property (A)
moved property (B)
birthplace or grave (C)
cemetery (D)
reconstructed property (E)
commemorative property (F)
less than 50 years old (G)

170 Thematic or Multiple Resource Nomination Name (code) _____
Historic Resources of Ephraim _____

220 Area of Significance (code) _____
Religion _____
Ethnic Heritage _____

180 NRHP List Name The Free Evangelical Lutheran Church

230 Period of Significance
1882-1934

190 Level of Significance
national (NA) _____
state (ST) _____
 local (LO)

340 Review Board Date _____
70 USGS Quad Map
Ephraim Quadrangle (7.5)

200 District Classification
pivotal (P) _____
contributing (C) _____
non-contributing (NC) _____

80 UTM Coordinates (Format: 99-999999-99999999)
16-486735-5000024

210 Applicable Criteria
 event (A)
person (B)
architecture/engineering (C)
information potential (D)

85 Listed Acreage less than one
60 Verbal Boundary Description Lot 23 west of road, Block I, Ephraim plat.

Description

The Free Evangelical Lutheran Church is a rectangular, frame Gothic Revival structure, with gabled roof, lancet arch windows, bell tower with gablets, and pyramidal steeple. The church, which measures 50 feet by 30 feet (and 18 feet high), has been sided with asbestos shingles. Limestone has been applied to the foundation and to the walls (in the form of buttresses). Despite exterior alterations, however, the church retains its simple profile and massing, the original tracery in its windows and the arched overlight above the front entry. The interior of the church has been modified but retains much of its original character. Alterations and energy conservation measures were undertaken in 1940. A towered ceiling was installed in an arched design with special attention to retain the original lancet windows. The original ceiling lines are followed in the altar and choir loft areas. The altar rail and pulpit were gifts from an old church in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. In 1904, the pews from an old Milwaukee, Wisconsin church replaced the previous curved back chairs. The baptismal font was carved by Bruce Eames of Door County in 1953. The present altar was built and carved by Charles Pelletier of Door County in 1958. Located on a bluff overlooking the village and harbor and near the nominated Moravian Church, the Free Evangelical Lutheran Church is a familiar and important landmark in the Village of Ephraim.

Architectural/Engineering Statement of Significance

690 Bibliographic References (Sources)

- A- "75th Anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Church, Ephraim Wisconsin, 1882-1957". Pamphlet on file at Ephraim Library, Ephraim, WI.
- B- Holand, Hjalmer Rued, History of Door County, Wisconsin, Volume I and II (Chicago, S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917).
- C- Kahlert, John, Pioneer Cemeteries (Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin, Meadow Land Publishers, 1981).

D- Peterson, Peter, On Both Sides of the Ocean: A Part of Per Hagen's Journey. Translated with intro. and notes by Kate Stafford and Harold Naess. (The Norwegian-American Study Units (code) Historical Association: Northfield, MN, 1984).

Religion: Protestant (Lutheran - Moravia)

350 Demolished _____ 360 Date Demolished _____

_____ yes _____ no

Historical Background

Although founded by Norwegian Moravians, the Village of Ephraim included many Scandinavian Lutheran settlers often unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the Moravian church. "There had long been talk among the Norwegians in Ephraim and the surrounding countryside about organizing a Lutheran congregation and building a church where they could follow the practices which they were accustomed to in the old county, for the Moravian service was so different that they did not really feel at home," wrote Peter Peterson, an influential Lutheran merchant (D). By 1878, Ephraim Lutherans met in village homes, with services conducted by a Lutheran minister visiting from Manitowoc. But the difficulty of travel interrupted those early services, and further plans for organizing a congregation lay dormant for a few years (A).

In 1882, however, six families "with diverse views of church fellowship" gathered in the home of Thomas Goodletson and established the Free Evangelical Lutheran Church with the hope of gathering all Lutherans in the area "into a church community and building a church in Ephraim" (A, D). The group carefully avoided sectarian conflict by remaining unaffiliated with any synod. Indeed, noted Peterson, "it was a major concern of the Lutherans in Ephraim to stay out of the church struggle" (D). Within weeks, sixty families pledged their support; a fund raising effort, directed by Peterson, had begun, and a new church building took shape.

When the new structure was dedicated in 1882, Peterson secured the services of the Reverend John Torgerson, an independent Lutheran minister from Chicago (and former president of the Hauge College and Eielson Seminary in that city) to conduct the service and help prepare a constitution. As a demonstration of tolerance, the group invited nearby Moravian, Methodist, and Baptist ministers to join in the ceremonies. Upon Torgerson's recommendation

Historical Statement of Significance

The Free Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ephraim is historically significant for its association with the development of the Norwegian Lutheran community in the village. Although Ephraim was dominated in its early years by the Moravian congregation led by Andreas Iverson, the Lutheran church, established by 1882, offered a center of community and worship for the growing number of Scandinavian Lutherans who felt estranged from the predominate Moravian faith. Although other Protestant sects had already been established in northern Door County by that date, the Free Evangelical Lutheran Church remained free of Synodical affiliation until 1895 and quickly became one of the major Protestant churches in the area, attracting members from both inside and outside the village limits. Since its founding in the 1880's, the church has continued to be a major force in the life of Ephraim's Scandinavian Lutherans.

RECORD NO. _____

Address: 3028 Church Street, Ephraim, WI _____

Description

Architectural/Engineering Statement of Significance

690 Bibliographic References (Sources)

700 Study Units (code)

350 Demolished 360 Date Demolished

_____ yes _____ no

Historical Background

the congregation hired Johan Olson of Chicago as its minister. Olson served the church for the next ten years (D).

From 1895 until 1897 the church was affiliated with the Augustana Synod, and in 1898 became affiliated with the United Lutheran Church of America (at which time it adopted the name "Bethania Scandanavian Evangelical Lutheran Church"). By that date, the church had 119 members, and services were conducted in Norwegian. But the creation of Peninsula State Park forced the removal of several of the congregation's families, and by 1915 membership had declined to 46 (A, D). Nevertheless, the church (now known as the Bethany Lutheran Church) has continued to serve Ephraim's Lutheran community until the present day and remains one of the preeminent symbols of the early Scand navian community that shaped the history of the village.

Historical Statement of Significance