

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

Historic Name: First Congregational Church of Clearwater		County: Wright
Common Name: Clearwater Gospel Tabernacle		Community: Clearwater, Mn.
Owner's Name and Address: Clearwater Gospel Tabernacle Clearwater, Minnesota 55320		Address/Legal Desc.: Bluff and Elm Streets (SW corner)
Classification:		Acreage:
Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure _____ Object _____ District _____		less than one acre
Condition:		Verbal Boundary Desc.
Excellent _____ Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair _____ Deteriorated _____		Clearwater Plat Lots 1,2 Block 29
Open to the Public:	Visible from the road:	
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No _____	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No _____	
Occupied:	Present Use:	
Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No _____ (limited)	Church	
History:		UTM Reference:
Date Constructed: 1861	Original Owner: Clearwater Congregation	15/417790/5029870 Clearwater Quad.
Architect/Builder: unknown	Original Use: Church	
Description: The First Congregational Church of Clearwater is located prominently on the southwest corner of Elm Street and Bluff Street: Lot One, Block Twenty-Nine of the Original Plat of Clearwater. The edifice, positioned near the edge of an alluvial terrace formed by the Mississippi River, overlooks the city. Scattered residential dwellings constructed of similiar material and scale surround the church. The Congregational Church was designed in a Greek Revival style of architecture. It is a one and one-half-story rectangular building of wood frame construction. Approximately twenty-nine feet wide by fifty-one feet long, it is three bays wide with the principal entrance centered at the east end-gable wall. The exterior walls are finished in a narrow clapboard siding. The roof, which has a medium pitch, is covered with modern asphalt shingles. Inset from the east		Level of Significance:
		Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State _____ Nation _____
		Status:
		Survey Date
		Local _____ State <u>9/73, 2/78</u> Nat'l. Reg. _____ Nat'l. Land. _____ HABS/HAER _____
Significance: The First Congregational Church of Clearwater is an excellent and well-preserved example of Greek Revival architecture. This classic style of architecture is associated with the New England pioneers who settled in Clearwater and along the river systems in Wright County. The church is also associated with the "Indian Scare" of 1862 and 1863, an event that affected the development of the county. The First Congregational Church of Clearwater, Minnesota, was organized April 20th, 1859, by six members under the pastorphism of O.S. Senter. The following year preparations were made by Rev. Royal Twitchell, then pastor, for a house of worship. Through the donations of material and labor by local residents, the Congregational Church was constructed and formally dedicated on May 1, 1861. The use of the Greek Revival style in the design of the edifice is		Theme/s:
		Primary <u>Architecture</u> Secondary <u>Settlement</u> Other _____
		Local Contact/Org.:
		Wright County Historical Society Buffalo, Minnesota
		Prepared by and date:
		John J. Hackett August 1978

(continued)

Description:

end gable is an open, single belfry capped with a pyramidal roof. The bell was purchased in 1863 from the McNeely Foundry. The roof is trimmed with a cornice boxed pediment. The detailing of the cornice is a plain, three part entablature. Pilaster boards offset the corners of the main building. The double, paneled doors of the principal entrance are embellished with a plain trabeated door surround. This detail is echoed in the window surrounds. The main window divisions are double hung sashes with nine over nine panes.

A single chimney stack, constructed of red brick, is located on the gable end enclosed by the frame addition. The church is set upon a modern concrete block foundation, the original being timbers. The main entrance stairs are also of concrete materials. The church was constructed to seat about 150 people. A choir loft is positioned at the rear of the building.

The attached one and one quarter-story framed "chapel" measures twenty-two feet by twenty-six feet and is affixed to the west end-gable. The integrity of the building has not been altered by the 1900 addition. Sensitivity to the original church building is witnessed by the use of similar materials and proportions. The building is in a good state of preservation.

Significance:

reflective of the New England origins of the congregation. The building is also illustrative of the ambitious attitudes these individuals held toward the flourishing river town community of Clearwater, founded just five years earlier.

As a result of the outbreak of the Sioux Uprising in 1862 at Fort Ridgley in Brown County and the Dustin family murders in Wright County in 1863, area homesteaders erected stockades at various points throughout the county. The intense psychological effect of the "Indian Scares" is reported to have depopulated the county; "probably fully a third of the entire population never again came to the county". (Curtiss Wedge, p. 149).

The Congregational Church was chosen to be fortified by the local villagers and township residents. It was the largest building in the village and situated at a commanding location. The church was thought of not only as a spiritual edifice for worship but, at these times, a fortress in the wilderness. Provisions were gathered and preparations made ready against a possible attack. As the months passed without incident it became apparent to the defenders that the "Indian Scares" were over. After the embattlements were removed from the church in 1863, a bell was purchased marking a more traditional use of the building.

The congregation had grown to about 80 members by 1881. Services were discontinued in the church by 1928. This was due to the peaking of the village growth, the establishment of other churches, and the unavailability of pastors. The church building was shared by other denominations and utilized as a community meeting hall. Presently, the Greek Revival building is occupied by the Clearwater Gospel Tabernacle and utilized for religious purposes.

Architecturally, the church is significant for its fine craftsmanship and detailing. It is also significant for its association with the "Yankee" influence in the settlement of the village and with the "Indian Scares" that affected the development of Wright County.