

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received SEP 1 1983  
date entered OCT 13 1983

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

1. Name

historic St. Mary's Church Non-Contiguous Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number off NO 11 not for publication

city, town Hague vicinity of

state North Dakota code county Emmons code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 St. Mary's Church Parish (Church) Father Lawrence Talty	Joachim and Teresa Volk (Cemetery) Hague
street & number	North Dakota 58542
city, town Hague, North Dakota 59542 vicinity of	state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Emmons County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Linton state North Dakota

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The St. Mary's Church Non-contiguous Historic District is comprised of the architecturally significant St. Mary's Church and the original cemetery of the St. Mary's parish which is significant for its expression of historic funerary folk art. The church and cemetery are cohesive elements representing physical manifestations of the culture of a very distinct ethnic settlement by Germans from Russia.

St. Mary's Church is a rectangular 140 by 50 feet building capped by a wood frame, asbestos-shingled, gable roof. The construction is of poured concrete and brick veneer. The building exhibits Romanesque Revival influence through its massive appearance relieved by narrow window openings, use of Roman arch throughout the design, and asymmetry of facade towers. Byzantine features include use of polychromy through colored ceramic tile and alternating brick and sandstone bands, use of clay tile, and the use of contrasting material to increase the appearance of mass.

Three sets of copper doors with quatrefoil motif panels form the narthex entrance. The doors are separated and enclosed by pilasters with horizontal brick and sandstone bands and fluted sandstone capitals. Stylized carved sandstone panels form the lintels over each recessed entrance door. Flanking entrance doors are capped by inlaid mosaic panels and rounded clay tile pent roofs. A projecting gablet capped by mosaic inlay and sandstone coping is flanked by pedestalled sandstone statues and narrow, round-headed stained glass windows with bezant motif lattice work. The sandstone tympanum pictures the Virgin Mary carved in relief and surrounded by stylized carved ornamentation. A Christus figure forms the central mullion and horizontal bar of a large double-arched stained glass window over the facade gablet. A sandstone string course and watertable highlight each exterior elevation, and sandstone coping trims the gable ends. Small projecting bays on the north and south elevations are crowned by sandstone coping and copper roofs.

The asymmetric tower belfries feature narrow round-headed windows, decorative horizontal sandstone bands, sandstone coping, and brick dentils. The south tower's spire soars to a height of 114 feet and is a landmark from any direction. The south bell tower windows are filled with wood tracing of a quatrefoil motif. Mosaic tile inlay creates a geometric pattern design between sandstone string course and coping.

St. Mary's main floor follows a simple basilican plan. The 96 by 40 feet nave seats more than 500 people. Behind the sanctuary and side altars are the Priest's chambers, altar boys' chambers, and connecting ambulatory. Adjacent to the narthex, the church baptistry and organ blower room are located in the space within the north tower. Above the narthex is a wood choir loft where the pipe organ and its pipe chambers are located. The Church's basement contains auditorian, stage, dressing rooms, kitchen, Mothers' Room and cloakroom.

The main floor is particularly noteworthy for its elaborate stencil painting, profuse plaster statuary ornamentation, and painted round canvas ceiling panels. The plaster rib and vault ceiling, side altars and sanctuary are articulated by intricate stylized floral and leaf stencilling. The sanctuary contains a massive and ornate plaster reredos enriched with statuary. Beneath the choir loft, the narthex door lintel and flanking pilaster capitals are formed from ornamental plaster panels. Four paintings on the projecting choir loft wall portray the history of St. Mary's Church. Seven tall Roman-arched stained glass windows portray likeness of the saints. Stained glass lunette windows are located in the sanctuary and above the side confessionals. Above each tall stained glass window a tiny, delicately painted angel face of plaster projects from the wall. Ornate plaster statues form the ceiling rib corbels and the stations of the cross.

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** Church: 1929 Cemetery: ca 1885-1915 **Builder/Architect** Church: Charles A. Hausler (arch/eng) Cemetery: Defort Schneider (blacksmith)

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

St. Mary's Church parish is the oldest continuous German Russian Catholic parish in North Dakota, and it has been the spiritual and social center for the ethnic community since initial settlement in the 1880's. Germans from Russia were among the most distinctive and cohesive ethnic groups to settle in the Northern Plains, and the settlement near Hague, North Dakota, was especially pronounced in the retention and practice of traditional architecture, domestic activities, and social organization. Both the size and the architectural form of St. Mary's Church reflect the importance of the church in the transplanted society. By far the most prominent structure in the small community, the church is primarily a fine example of Romanesque Revival architecture with strong Byzantine influence. The elaborate design and fine detail are outstanding among religious architecture of the region. Although this church was constructed in 1929 and gradually finished in later years, the building clearly reflects the adherence of the parishioners to traditional forms and quality of workmanship.

German Russian pioneers began settlement in Emmons County in 1885. The first communities, Selz and Elsaas, were abandoned after the Milwaukee Railroad line was built between them, through present Hague. The settlers converged in Hague, which was incorporated as a village in 1908. The history of St. Mary's Church parish closely follows the history of Selz, Elsaas and Hague. Early church services were held in private homes, often conducted by travelling priests from neighboring communities. In 1890 a small church was built west of Hague, in the Elsaas vicinity. The pioneer cemetery, which has passed into private ownership, is located near the old church site. In 1906 a new church was built in Hague proper, and the church was incorporated under state law on August 13, 1906.

On February 13, 1929, fire destroyed this church. Despite the deepening Depression, parishioners raised funds to build a new church which would nearly duplicate the exterior style and interior opulence of the 1906 church. By April, 1929, bids were being requested for church construction. The new cornerstone was laid August 4, 1929, and dedication ceremonies took place June 19, 1930.

The architect/engineer was Charles A. Hausler of the Harry Firminger Association from St. Paul, Minnesota. Bettenburg Construction Company, also of St. Paul, was the general contractor. Much labor was supplied by local church members. The church basement was excavated entirely by hand and with assistance by horses. Hebron brick from North Dakota was used for construction.

Parishioners continued pledging extra support during the 1940's to complete painting, stencilling and plaster work. This work was contracted with the St. Paul Statuary Company of St. Paul. A Schaefer pipe organ was built in 1948, and during the 1950's, ornate copper and glass lantern lighting was installed.

In St. Mary's old cemetery the deceased are buried with their feet facing east: the direction of the rising sun and the holy city of Jerusalem. The wrought iron crosses personify the thrifty, practical, hard-working and religious character of Germans from Russia. Although no records for the church's pioneer cemetery exist, the plot was founded within a short time following the initial 1885 surge of German Russian pioneers into the Hague area. It continued to be used until approximately 1915 when a new burial plot was initiated south of the present church. The cemetery's hand-crafted wrought iron grave markers are one of the largest concentrations of this unique funerary folk art form in

(See Continuation Sheet)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .85 acres *acreage of each = .85 acres (1/2/83)*

Quadrangle name Hague Quadrangle & Senger Lake South, N.Dak. Quadrangle scale 7.5 minutes

UTM References Church

Cemetery: Part A

A 

1	4	4	2	2	6	5	5	5	0	9	7	3	3	5
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B 

1	4	4	0	6	0	5	5	9	7	5	5	0
Zone	Easting				Northing							

C 

1	4	4	2	0	6	0	5	5	0	9	7	4	7	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

E 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification Church: Block 8, Town of Hague, North Dakota.

Cemetery: Commencing at a point 40 meters west and 9 meters south of the northeast corner of Section 2, Township 129 North, Range 75 West; measuring 95 meters south, 35 meters northwest, 80 meters north and 30 meters east to the point of beginning.

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

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia Jessen and Kurt P. Schweigert

organization Cultural Research & Management, Inc. date June 6, 1983

street & number P. O. Box 2154 telephone (701) 258-1215

city or town Bismarck state North Dakota 58502

# 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 James E. Sherry

title North Dakota State Historic Preservation Officer date July 25, 1983

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

Beth Grosvenor  
Keeper of the National Register

date 10/13/83

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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Description

During the 1950's a single-story, square, brick building was joined to the northwest corner of the church. This simple building serves as rectory and priest's office. The rectory joins the church by means of an enclosed brick hallway, and does not detract from or compromise the church's architectural integrity. Also located on the church grounds, north of the church, is a grotto fashioned from the entrance of the parish's 1906 church which was destroyed by fire in 1929.

The old St. Mary's Cemetery is located approximately one and a half miles west of Hague and measures approximately 311 by 98 feet. Enclosed by a woven wire fence and wrought iron gate, the plot has a north-south axis and is located on flat ground somewhat lower than the surrounding prairies. Four types of grave markers are in the old cemetery: hand-wrought iron crosses, foundry-produced cast iron crosses, cast concrete monuments and marble monuments. There is also a small burial plot enclosed by an iron fence within the cemetery.

By far the most predominant form of marker found here is the hand-made type of wrought iron cross or "eiserne kreuze." These crosses are found only in German Russian Catholic and Ukranian cemeteries, and are an important distinctive art form. This type of marker was made in an ordinary local blacksmith shop with hand tools. The blacksmith used iron and galvanized metal parts he had on hand: clamps, collars, nuts, bolts, rivets, wagon wheels, and other scrap metal. The blacksmith forged these materials into intricate and elaborate designs, and very rarely were two crosses fashioned with the same design.

Ethnic researcher Lewis R. Marquardt describes the funerary art of St. Mary's pioneer cemetery as follows:

"The fabricator of the metal crosses of old Hague cemetery, a certain Defort Schneider was probably not a learned artist; though from all appearances he was a most excellent blacksmith and proved to be a very great artist indeed. Using mainly the cruciform shape of the Roman cross, this artist constructed designs of beautifully intricate and delicately executed metal work. None of his work is what one might call sophisticated, yet every possible element of design or character or ornamentation is dared by this artist-blacksmith. Utilizing to the fullest the inherent properties of his material in the best tradition of the old-world craftsmen, this artist crafted the circle, the diamond, spear points, tendrils and coiled scrolls, double-bar and single-bar crosses; he twisted ribbon-iron, bar metal, and square rods; he fashioned spikes, and perhaps a favorite of his, single stems of metal rods to suggest the wind-blown grain or the rays of the noonday sun. He used many symbols, most often the heart but also the circle and the square; he placed metal flowers such as roses, tulips, or lillies upon his crosses thus adding texture and color; he placed a cross upon a cross, he added stars. Some of this grave crosses are tall and slender, others low and square. As a further elaboration, a few crosses are parental in design, with minature crosses used repetitively on each extremity; others are much more simple."

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Significance:

the state, with very few intrusive stone markers.

German Russian funerary art has received nation-wide attention from folklorists. The iron crosses are the subject of photographic exhibits and several publications. Wrought iron grave markers appear to have been used exclusively by German Russian Catholics and Ukrainians who can trace their ancestry to Roman Catholic colonies in the Black Sea or Volga River regions of Russia. This type of funerary folk art is no longer practiced in the United States. The surviving crosses remain open to the effects of time and nature. The recent revival of interest in the "eiserne kreuze" has been beneficial to the art form. Today the old St. Mary's Cemetery is carefully tended and the crosses wear a protective coat of silver paint.

The markers remain a tribute to the spirit of the German Russian pioneers. Says anthropologist Timothy J. Kolberdanz:

"The wrought-iron grave crosses of the German-Russians -- with their unbroken hearts of metal, brightly-painted stars, endless circles, banner-waving angles, sunburst designs, power-charged lightning bolts, exquisitely-formed lillies, and rose blossoms that rust but never wilt -- evoke the defiant spirit of their mortal makers. In a bold effort to transcend the finite, this defiance was tempered and hammered into the timeless language of iron."

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