National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received MAR 6 1986 date entered APR 1 5 1986

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

1. Name

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church historic St. John Lutheran Church and/or common Location 670 County Trunk Highway S street & number not for publication New Fane city, town _ vicinity of Fond du Lac 39 55 Wisconsin code code state county 3. Classification Category **Ownership** Status **Present Use** public ____ occupied district _ agriculture museum X X building(s) private ... unoccupied _ commercial _ park private residence __ structure both _ work in progress educational X religious **Public Acquisition** __ site Accessible entertainment ___ object in process ves: restricted government scientific heing considered X yes: unrestricted industrial _ transportation military no other: 4. **Owner of Property** name Congregation of the St. John Ev. Luth. Church -Rev. Charles Reehl. Pastor street & number 670 County Trunk Highway S New Fane city, town vicinity of state Wisconsin 53040 **Location of Legal Description** 5. courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fond du Lac County Courthouse street & number 160 South Macy Fond du Lac city, town state Wisconsin 54935 **Representation in Existing Surveys** 6. titleWisconsin Inventory of Historic Rischesproperty been determined eligible? _yes __X_no 1974 federal X state date county _ local depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin Madison city, town state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

Cọn	diti	on	

_ aood

_ fair

_ excellent

Check one _____ deteriorated ______ unaltered ____ ruins ____X_ altered ____ unexposed

Check one _____ original site _____ moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

St. John Lutheran church is a fieldstone building nestled in the southern end of the northern unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest five and one half miles northeast of Kewauskum, Town of Auburn, Fond du Lac County, in the unincorporated village of New Fane. It is situated in a picturesque valley on a slight rise of ground overlooking the East Branch of the meandering Milwaukee River on the southeast corner of the intersection of County Trunk Highways S and Youth Camp Road.

St. John Lutheran Church is a rural Gothic fieldstone building echoing medieval inspiration, rectangular in plan measuring 36 feet by 60 feet. The stonework is exceptionally well done with boulders selected for size and color, laid in graduated two foot courses with decreasing stone size as the courses reach the tip of the gable. An unusual feature is the dressed limestone and fieldstone angle buttresses at the corners.

The exterior walls are in excellent original condition. The gabled roof, wood shingles covered with asphalt in 1960, has a decorative buff brick cornice of four rows alternating recessed stretchers and extended headers; and a seven foot square by ten foot high shingled bell tower at the west center front. The fifteen foot, four-sided steeple was struck by lightning in the 1920's. A wooden cross replaces a rooster weathervane and a larger single louvred window replaces the double louvers on The bell tower is six feet shorter than the original. three sides. Intact is the 48 inch copper alloy bell weighing 1200 pounds purchased in 1899 from the Stucksteded Company in St. Louis, Missouri. There is a small chimney positioned north of the east gable ridge. Also at the east face (rear) of the church is an entrance to the sacristy, a loophole or rear vent to assure air movement and to prevent condensation and a larger Gothic stained glass altar window. (1) The pointed Gothic arched windows arranged symmetrically, four on each side, are trimmed in buff brick with a rowlock arch of headers acting as a dripstone. The original glass inserts were plain paned glass. (2) The entrance double doors are not original. Above them inscribed in stained glass is 'Ev. Luth. St. Johannes Kirche'. Above the Gothic entranceway arch is a bulls-eye window circled in brick containing the Lutheran accepted symbol for the all seeing eye of God which is an orb, like an eye, in a triangle executed in stained glass. Crowning this is an inscription in German and the English equivalent is St. John's Ev. Church of the Unaltered Augsberg Confession, the early confessional writings of the Lutheran Church in Germany in Luther's day, which is a basis of the church's theological teachings. The walls are two feet thick with four foot thick foundation walls built by the congregation during 1943-1944 excavation for a full basement. Architect Ralph Schaeffer designed the nine foot square south basement entrance replacing 'trap' doors. (3) The roof is twelve feet at center and tapers to eight feet.

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The interior of the church has maintained its structural integrity with some changes made during the period 1902 through 1907. The nave was divided creating a chancel and altar niche. This division was indicated by a plastered arch, change in floor-level and prayer rail. The resulting side rooms became a sacristy and guild room, formerly used to house the Wilcox reed organ in use until 1944. The organ room is now the guild room. The subsequent fresco paintings were done by C.A. Bros. Knueller. The stained glass design for all the side windows is identical except for the medallion centers depicting scripture from the Old Testament on the north wall and New Testament on the south wall. The small entrance vestibule contains stairways to the balcony choir loft and basement on one side and an enclosed windowed room on the other. The wooden balcony addition is ninteen feet deep spanning the width of the church supported by two wooden octagon pillars standing on each side of the center aisle. The balcony floor crosses the center of two of the stained glass windows and pews flank a Kimball pipe organ in the center. The organ came from Grafton Hall of Fond du Lac and was rebuilt by Rev. Arthur Haupt in 1960, During this 1902 refurbishing period an eliptical stamped metal ceiling was installed over exposed beams, new pews, a furnace and 2-1/4 inch wood floorboards were laid on a diagonal. Additionally, a cemetery was laid out on the south side of the church. Today, the altar niche is painted light blue and the plaster walls of the nave are pale yellow with painted wood trim.

The congregation owns 5.41 acres in total, comprising the school, parsonage and cemetery which abuts the church on three sides. The cemetery is included in the nominated property as a contributory componant to the church setting. The brick school building, constructed in 1921, was closed as a regular day school in 1963 and functions today for meetings, classes and social events. At the south edge of the property is a frame parsonage built in 1937 and metal sided in 1971. On the opposite side of the highway, across from the church, stood protective wagon barns built to shelter horses during three hour services. The sheds were removed in 1931 for auto parking.

Archeological Potential

Formal archeological investigation of the immediate area of the church has not been made, and the site is not listed in the files of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. There have been no reports of archeological findings in either excavation for the church foundation or later for the basement, and also no findings during digging in the surrounding cemetery.

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Footnotes:

(1) Congregation Council minutes, August 17, 1902; 1, altar window installed - a gift from August Heberer and Ph. Schneeberger.'

(2) The oldest member (age 88) of the congregation, Mr. Petermann, said that the stained glass windows were in place when he started Sunday school around 1904.

(3) Conversation with Richard W. E. Perrin, March 15, 1984.

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8. Significance



Specific dates 1870-1871 Builder/Architect Builder: Lampert & Beck Period of Significance:1871-1880

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

St. John Lutheran Church is one of a reduced number of rural Gothic inspired fieldstone churches in Wisconsin, and is especially noteworthy as a rare, if not only, example of graduated fieldstone construction featuring stepped angle corner buttresses. It is also important for its associations with the early German/Pomeranian settlement in the Town of Auburn in Fond du Lac County.

Architectural:

St. John's church is a simple German church in the Gothic style relying on only a few elements to suggest the Gothic picturesque style which developed in the United States during the nineteenth century. The building's rather steeply pitched gabled roof, pointed-arch openings for entrances and windows and general emphasis on verticality are all Gothic-inspired features. Comparable fieldstone architecture was not found in Fond du Lac County. Fieldstone construction was popular in Wisconsin between 1850 and 1880 and many fieldstone structures were built in neighboring Washington County. The reconnaissance survey of Fond du Lac county conducted by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin identified four catholic churches built in the 1850's and St. Mathias, St. Hubert, St. Peter, and St. Augustine all 1860's, similar in size, however lacking the distinguishing angle butresses of St. John Lutheran Church.

A comparison of the larger St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Adell, Sheboygan County to St. John Lutheran Church illustrates the early German and Irish manner or approach in working with fieldstone, since most of northern Europe was also glaciated land. The Germans of St. John's used larger boulders with minimum mortar and the Irish of St. Patrick's chose smaller stones and heavier applied mortar. Architectural Historian Richard W. E. Perrin, F.A.I.A. notes St. John Church is 'not quite as colorful and somewhat understated, but equally interesting as an example of outstanding fieldstone architecture'.(1) The original mortar on St. Patrick's was pink cast however the more recent restorative work on the masonry is carried out in gray and tan. No masonry restoration has been done nor is needed for St. John Church. The mortar is buff complimenting the deep green, grey, pink, tan, olive drab, red, and black fieldstones.

Major Bibliographical References 9.

See Continuation Sheets

10. Geographical Da	ta
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UT M References	
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Verbal boundary description and justification	tion
See Continuation Sheet	
List all states and counties for properties	overlanning state or county houndaries
state code	county code
state code	county code
11. Form Prepared B	······
organization North Point Historica	l Society _{date} October 10,1985
street&number Post Office Box 55	7 telephone 414-271-2395
city or town Milwaukee	state Wisconsin 53201
12. State Historic Pr	eservation Officer Certification
The evaluated significance of this property withi	n the state is:
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	fficer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89- on in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated h by the National Park Service.
State Historic Preservation Officer signature	hoppion
itle	date 2/24/86
For NPS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is include	id in the National Register
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Keeper of the National Register	
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In a personal interview, March 15, 1984, with Mr. Perrin, the following comments were made: 'St. John Lutheran Church is a good example of a method of construction. One thing you don't see too often are these angle buttresses at the corners. I haven't seen anything comparable to this form of construction in Wisconsin. The fieldstone is rather common but the use of the corner buttresses and the matter of treating the graduated stone is most unusual. There might be others around, but I haven't found them.'

The three and one half foot flare of the two front corner buttresses is a foot wider than the flare of the rear buttresses. They are solid throughout of tooled bluish-gray limestone and random fieldstone laid at key structural points. The greater weight of these buttresses pushes down greatly to withstand lateral forces. The front half of the church has a thickened lower section of wall or what appears to be a small wall running out from the main building. This coupled with the wide angled buttresses at the front corners gives greater rigidity to the whole structure.

The St. John Lutheran Church is a fine example of Gothic-inspired church design. Its destinctive filedstone construction represents a significant example of a rural building technique popularized by early settlers to the region.

<u>History:</u>

In the year 1953, the large Pommeranian immigration to Wisconsin began. In the sixties and seventies these numbers increased. The Milwaukee area newspaper reported: 'Hundreds of emigrants are continually arriving here bound for the interior to settle on unoccupied lands. The German emigration to Wisconsin this year will amount to more than that of the last three years combined.' (2) The emigration started because Friedrich Wilhelm III consolidated Lutheran and Reform churches in Germany into a state church. Staunch Lutherans refused to unite and were often imprisoned. Thus many Lutherans left Germany and sailed from Hamburg in 1839 settling in Buffalo, New York. (3) One group came to Milwaukee and formed the Buffalo Synod at 28th Street and Wisconsin. Some were not artisans and wanted to farm so they left Milwaukee for the most southeasterly township in Fond du Lac County. (4) A Buffalo Synod Church was organized as Trinity Lutheran, May 1, 1858, (5) approximately one 1/4 mile south of New Fane, it was the oldest in the community but disbanded prior to 1910. (6) There was a falling out among the members and some of the trustees of Trinity later became founding members of St. John Lutheran Church. Alfred Herman Seefeldt, 88 years old, indicated that the membership dispursed, some to St. John's and others to St. Lucas in Kewaskum. All that remains of the



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original is the Buffalo Synod Cemetery on Moraine Drive. At one time the Missouri Synod parish of St. John's included mission congregations in Town Forest, Dundee, Wacousta, Five Corners, Kewaskum, and Town Scott.

August Oppermann, one of the early settlers of this community, came from the Hocheim Lutheran Parish near Theresa, WI. and conducted home reading services for other like minded settlers after their break with the near-by Buffalo Synod-Trinity Lutheran Church. In 1859 a letter or delegation was sent to Pastor H. Dicke with the plea that he preach to the local group. Rev. Dicke was the founder of the Inner Mission in the southeastern district making exploratory trips in an effort to find the scattered Lutherans. Missionaries like Dicke, followed the settlers and congregations were organized in the 1850's for most denominations. (7) Joining in the first service conducted by Pastor Dicke on December 5, 1859 were August Oppermann, Henry Heberer, Carl Bleck, August Lubach, William Backhaus, Christian Bilgow, August Heise, and Frederick Schultz. On June 24, 1861 a board of trustees for the German Lutheran Church named St. Johannes was incorporated. Two were elected for president; Fred. Schulz and L. Backhaus. Others named to the board were W. Ebert, August Oppermann, Dettmenn, and Bilgow.(8)

Early settlers, Henry and Elizabeth Heberer arrived in Eblesville in 1855 and built the first general store and later a cheese factory. (9) In January 1863, the Heberers sold the congregation 2.025 acres of land for \$14.00, (10) whereupon a log church north of the present fieldstone church was built. No photo exists of this early church, however, after the stone church was built the log church became the school until 1879 when a new log school house was built on the northwest corner of the congregation land.

The congregation of St. John, at a special meeting on November 1, 1870, decided to build a stone church based upon a church plan obtained from Dr. H. C. Schwan (11) who later was president of the Missouri Synod from 1875 to 1899. For many years Dr. Schwan was pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Cleveland. Conversations with Rev. Richard Gahl, Executive Director of the Missouri Synod Ohio District and Rev. Juergens, District Archivist failed to uncover a similarly designed church in Ohio. However there is evidence that church plans were lent to outside communities, (12) Pastor J. Henry Gienapp, district archivist of South Wisconsin District could not recall a church similar to St. John but noted: 'I don't think there was an accepted manner or style associated with our church building. They more or less went their own way but tried to make it look 'churchy' and imitated the Gothic style.'

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Certain specifications were outlined in the council minutes: the church fabric was to be fieldstone; 36' wide and 60' long with a suitable steeple; and the members were to donate their labor skills and have the fieldstone to the site or find a substitute. (13) The mason-contractor was Florian Lampert of Lampert & Beck who settled in the 1840's in Washington County near West Bend. (14) (15) St. John's Lutheran Church was dedicated November 26, 1871. (16)

Footnotes:

(1) Richard W.E. Perrin, <u>Historic Wisconsin Buildings: A Survey in</u> Pioneer Architecture 1835-1870 (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1981), p.96-97.

(2) The Milwaukee Sentinel, August 13, 1860.

(3) Otto F. Hattstaedt, History of the Southern Wisconsin District <u>of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States/</u> St. Louis, Missouri translated by the Wisconsin Historical Records Survey Division of Community Service, Programs Work Projects Administration (Madison, Wisconsin, Sept., 1941) pp.9-23

(4) Rev. J. Henry Gienap, District Archivist of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod of South Wisconsin District, interviews July 24, 1985, and August 9, 1985

(5) Original document in the possession of Alfred Herman Seefeldt, Kewaskum, Wisconsin.

(6) Alfred H. Seefeldt interviews September 12th and 13th, 1985.

(7) Hattstaedt p. 28

(8) Mortgages, Volume 8 p. 205

(9) Ruth Shaw Worthing and Ray Thornton, <u>A Photographer's History</u> of Fond du Lac County City and Township

(10) Register of Deeds, Volume 31 p. 101



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(11) St. John Congregation Council Minutes, November 1, 1870

(12) 'A very large early Cleveland Church on West 25th sent their plans to another congregation in Michigan. Interview with Rev. Richard Gahl, Olmsted Falls, Ohio, September 9, 1985

(13) Council Minutes, Rev. G. F. Schilling, pastor 1870-1888

(14) <u>Commemorative Biographical Record of the Fox River Valley</u> <u>Counties of Brown, Outagamie and Winnebago</u> (Chicago: J. H. Beers & Co., 1895) p.1210-1211

(15) Council Minutes, December 7, 1871

(16) <u>Ibid.</u>, October 18,1871



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9. Major Bibliographical References

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- Worthing, Ruth Shaw. The History of Fond du Lac County as Told by its Place-Names. Oshkosh: Globe Printing Company.1976.

General References:

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Webber, F.R. <u>The Small Church; How to Build and Furnish it with</u> <u>Some Account of the Improvement of Existing Buildings</u>. Cleveland: J. H. Jansen, 1937

Interviews:

Rev. Richard Gahl, Executive Director Missouri Synod Ohio District 6451 Columbia Rd. Olmsted Falls, Ohio 216-235-2297 Rev. Juergen 216-886-1559

Pastor J. Henry Gienapp District Archivist Lutheran Church Missouri Synod of South Wisconsin Dist. 414-475-5307

Rev. Paul Hoenecke 1420 Parkview Drive Kewaskum, Wisconsin 414-626-2591

Alpheus Kleinke 138 North Fond du Lac Campbellsport, Wisconsin 414-533-4908 Rev. Robert Lindau, former pastor St. John Lutheran Church 414-626-2309

Frank Moertl N95 W32259 County Line Road Hartland, Wisconsin

Richard W. E. Perrin, F.A.I.A. 9825 West Concordia Milwaukee, Wisconsin 414-873-0534

Alfred Herman Seefeldt 9310 County Trunk Highway S Kewaskum, Wisconsin 414-626-2921

Ruth Shaw Worthing 20 Sunset Circle Fond du Lac, Wisconsin 414-922-4466





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10. Boundary description and justification:

The nominated property is a rectangle of land in that part of the unplatted lands of SE 1/4 of Section 26, Town 13 North, Range 19 East, described as follows: commencing thirty five rods west of post between Section 35 and 26 running west twelve rods thence south twenty seven rods thence east twelve rods thence north twenty seven rods to the place of starting containing three hundred twenty eight rods of land.

11. NOMINATION PREPARED BY (continued)

Research Assistance by:

Jane M. Dohmen 2775 East Moraine Drive Kewaskum,

October 10,1985 (414)626-8024 Wisconsin 53040.

