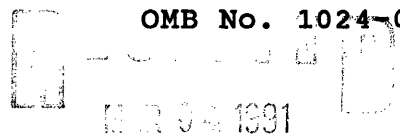


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL
REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church

other name/site number: AHRS Site No. BTH-001

2. Location

street & number: N/A not for publication: N/A

city/town: Kwethluk vicinity: N/A

state: AK county: Bethel code: 050 zip code: 99621

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: Russian Orthodox Church Buildings and Sites Thematic Resources

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination

request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

Judith S. Pittman
Signature of certifying official

Feb. 21, 1991
Date

Alaska
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register Rustenetta J. Lee 4/15/91
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

for _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: Religion Sub: Religious structure

Current: Vacant/not in use Sub: N/A

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Other

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation: Wood roof: Wood
 walls: Wood other: _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church is a modest example of a Russian Orthodox church, presenting an eclectic mixture of Russo-European and Alaskan architectural traditions. Constructed in September and October of 1935, the church replaced at least one earlier building that was severely deteriorated (and was demolished in 1936). St. Nicholas Church is constructed of cedar, from its structural framework to the cedar shingles covering roof and walls. The foundation is log, with the sill laid directly on grade. Deterioration of the lower logs is evident. A fence encloses the church property and graveyard. Numerous fenced gravesites, some of which predate the church, lie within the property.

The floor plan is rectangular, and resembles a ship, a design often followed in Russian Orthodox churches. It measures 51'8" x 10'6". The roof is a simple gable. Two cupolas supporting onion-shaped domes surmounted with crosses formerly were located along the ridgeline. Blown off by high winds circa 1983, the cupolas are currently stored adjacent to the building and are in poor condition.

The sanctuary occupies the easterly 12'8". A distance of 6'10" separates the iconostas, the border of the sanctuary, from the altar, or krilos. The remaining 32' of the main structure comprises the nave. Four wood-framed windows are located at equal intervals along the south and north walls. Slightly vertical in appearance, each sash is set with six lights.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

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A vestibule, which rises into a handsome belltower with square base, is centered on the west facade. It is a square room measuring 12'7" on a side and has a low angle hip roof surmounted by the belltower. A small window, with single glass pane, is centered on each of the side walls of the vestibule. The entrance doors are plain, but handsome, double wooden doors constructed of vertical planking. A simple flat-roofed, open porch, which formerly protected these doors, was removed in the late 1970s due to advanced deterioration. Two steps leading to the porch were removed at the same time. These steps and porch had replaced a slightly smaller, earlier porch.

Square in plan, the lower portion of the belltower is set approximately six inches into the front eave of the main roof. A single round light with sunburst frame is located in the north and south walls. Two round lights with similar, strikingly decorative frames are set into the west (front) wall with one located directly above the other.

The cupola with crown-shaped dome which sat directly on the square base was in deteriorated condition and was removed in 1984 or 1985 to avoid additional damage from high winds. It is located on the ground adjacent to the church and is in poor condition. The dome construction is wood frame covered with canvas. The octagonal cupola has four open arches and housed five bells of various sizes. Three of the bells have cracked and two have been installed in other locations. Handsome crosses, formerly located at the peak of the dome and four corners of the base, have been removed. These crosses, as well as the two mentioned earlier, were constructed in the village of Kwethluk specifically for St. Nicholas.

The church is in remarkably good condition for a building which has stood empty for more than ten years. It has sustained some water damage in the area of the belltower and through deteriorating window frames, but basically is sound. The alterations, removal of the cupolas and front porch, are significant modifications, but all are reversible. Physical remains and photographs of the cupolas and porch are available to guide accurate restoration efforts.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Locally

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A

Areas of Significance: Religion
Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1935

Significant Dates: 1935

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Russian Orthodox Church

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X
See continuation sheet.

Constructed in the fall of 1935, St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church at Kwethluk replaced an earlier Russian Orthodox church building in the community. A small, modest building by today's standards, the 1935 church was one of two major community buildings in the small Yupik Eskimo village during the 1930s and is the oldest standing structure in the village today. The floor plan is rectangular and resembles a ship, a design found in a number of Russian Orthodox churches in Alaska. In addition to church functions, Kwethluk residents used the building for many community activities.

Russian Orthodoxy took root in many Alaska Native villages in western Alaska during the mid-1800s, and expanded during a major missionary effort conducted by the church in the 1890s and early 1900s. Some reasons for the success of the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska include its easy blending of Native and Russian traditions, early reliance on local lay leadership, and promotion of the use of the Native language.

The first Orthodox church at Kwethluk, a small Yupik Eskimo village on the lower Kuskowkim River 18 miles northeast of the village of Bethel, opened sometime during the early 1900s. A little earlier, another

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEETSection number 8

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religious denomination, the Moravians, attempted to establish a mission station at Kwethluk. They sent an Eskimo lay missionary to the village in 1890. He was murdered later that year by the village men for reasons still unclear. The Moravians sent another helper to the village in 1895 and built a small chapel in 1896. What happened to this building is unknown. In 1926, the Moravians constructed an orphanage and boarding school three miles upriver from Kwethluk that they operated until 1973. The Moravians built another chapel at Kwethluk in 1945. In their annual reports, however, the Moravian missionaries wrote that Russian Orthodoxy was the major religion in the village of Kwethluk.

The U.S. Bureau of Education reported that 136 people, all Natives, lived in 22 cabins and one aboriginal kashgee (community men's house) at Kwethluk in 1930. A report nine years later said that all of the homes in town were in poor condition. The first Orthodox church had deteriorated to the extent it had to be replaced in 1935. An economic survey of Kethluk, written in January 1939, noted that the residents "by community action built a substantial well-constructed church built from lumber purchased in Seattle. They arrange for the church supplies, make collections to meet the running expenses, and partically support the native priest."

The new church and the school, the latter built by the U.S. Bureau of Education in 1924, were the major buildings in the village and the only buildings available for community activities. A "very small" trading post operated at Kwethluk in 1939. Kwethluk residents held many weddings, funerals, holiday celebrations, and other community functions at St. Nicholas Church. Before they built their chapel at Kwethluk in 1945, the Moravians used the Russian Orthodox church in the community for occasional services.

Kwethluk is still a small, predominantly Native community. A new school and new houses have replaced the buildings standing during the 1930s. The 1935 church has also been replaced by a new building, but villagers want to preserve the old church--the oldest standing building in their community.

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- X State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than 1 acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Table with 4 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing, and a blank column. Rows A, B, C, D.

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The nominated property occupies Lot 9, Block 15 of the Federal Townsite Land Survey (USS 4221), and is roughly 75' x 50' in size.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the church building and adjacent yard that have historically been associated with the property.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Joan M. Antonson, State Historian; Donna Lane, Architectural Historian

Organization: Alaska Division of Parks Date: April 13, 1989
Street & Number: P.O. Box 107001 Telephone: 907-762-2622
City or Town: Anchorage State: Alaska Zip: 99510-7001

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9

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Kreta, Joseph P. Russian Orthodox Church Survey. 1975. Copy in files of Office of History and Archaeology, Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Anchorage.

Oswalt, Wendell H. Historic Settlements along the Kuskokwim River, Alaska, Alaska State Library Historical Monograph No. 7 (Juneau: Alaska Division of State Libraries and Museums, 1980).

Smith, Barbara S. Russian Orthodoxy in Alaska: A History, Inventory, and Analysis of the Church Archives in Alaska with an Annotated Bibliography (Anchorage: Alaska Historical Commission, 1980).

U.S. Congress. Compilation of Material Relating to the Indians of the United States and the Territory of Alaska, Including Certain Laws and Treaties Affecting Such Indians, House Resolution 66, 81st Cong., 2d Sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950).

Vitt, Kurt H. and James W. Henkleman. Harmonious to Dwell: A History of the Alaska Moravian Church, 1885-1985. (Bethel, Alaska: Moravian Seminary and Archives, 1985).

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

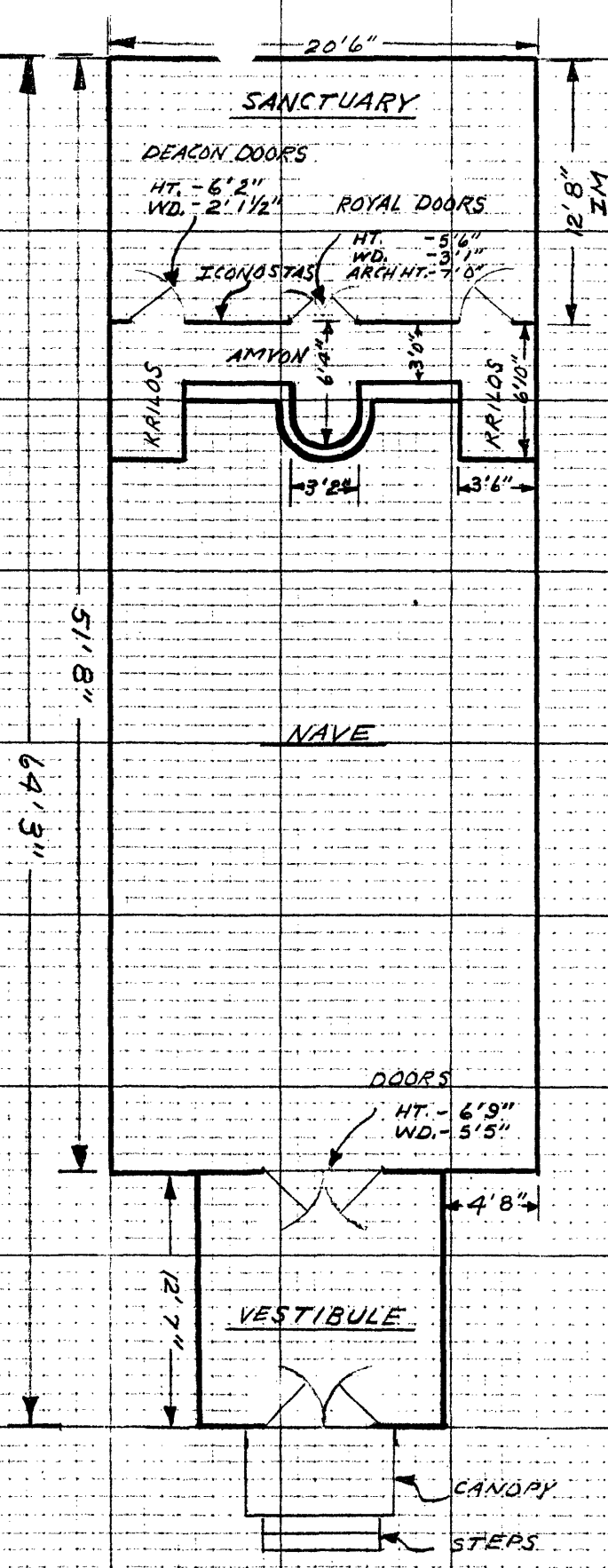
OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Photograph identification

- =====
1. St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church (AHRS Site No. BTH-001)
Kwethluk, Alaska
Nick N. Epchook
December 1987
P.O. Box 60, Kwethluk, Alaska 99621
Looking east
 2. St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church (AHRS Site No. BTH-001)
Kwethluk, Alaska
Nick N. Epchook
December 1987
P.O. Box 60, Kwethluk, Alaska 99621
Looking southeast
 3. St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church (AHRS Site No. BTH-001)
Kwethluk, Alaska
Nick N. Epchook
December 1987
P.O. Box 60, Kwethluk, Alaska 99621
Looking northeast
 4. St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church (AHRS Site No. BTH-001)
Kwethluk, Alaska
Nick N. Epchook
December 1987
P.O. Box 60, Kwethluk, Alaska 99621
Looking northwest



NOTE:
 I.M. = INSIDE MEASUREMENTS
 THE CHURCH STRUCTURE
 WAS MEASURED FROM THE
 OUTSIDE.

SCALE 1/8" = 1' (APPROX)

**ST. NICHOLAS
 RUSSIAN ORTHODOX
 CHURCH
 KWETHLUK, ALASKA**