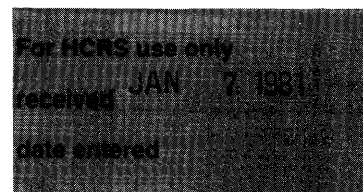


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



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

**1. Name**

historic First Congregational Church, U.C.C.

and/or common Naponee Heritage Center or Naponee Octagon Church

**2. Location**

street & number N/A N/A not for publication

city, town Naponee N/A vicinity of congressional district Third

state Nebraska code 031 county Franklin code 061

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Naponee Historical Society

street & number Box 128

city, town Naponee N/A vicinity of state Nebraska

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk, Franklin County Courthouse

street & number 405-15th Avenue

city, town Franklin state Nebraska

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date On-going  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved      date     N/A    

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

The First Congregational Church is a one-story, frame, octagon-shaped building on the northern limits of the village of Naponee (1970 pop. 187). The entrances are on the southwest and the southeast, and there are three tri-part windows, one each on the south, west, and east. The octagonal hipped roof was originally highlighted by a bell turret over the southeast door. In 1926, the present one-story, hipped-roofed porch, with partially enclosed sides, was built on the southern three sides of the church, and a new bell turret with open belfry and pyramidal roof was erected, centered on the porch. The basement was added in 1924.

Since 1974, the church building has housed the Naponee Historical Society; care has been taken to preserve the church appurtenances on the interior.

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

**Specific dates**      1887                      **Builder/Architect**      N/A

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The first Congregational Church of Naponee is architecturally significant to Nebraska as a rare example of the Octagon Mode in the state and the only known product in religious architecture.

Octagon buildings, although rare, have been produced throughout world history and were advocated early in America's architectural history by Thomas Jefferson, who designed an octagon house (Poplar Forest) and octagonal, polygonal, and round rooms in buildings which were not tied to rectangular traditions (Clay Lancaster, pp. 103-105). The apex of octagon building in this country occurred in the 1850's, inspired by the writings of phrenologist and social reformer Orson Squire Fowler. In his A Home for All, or A New, Cheap, Convenient, and Superior Mode of Building (1848), Fowler attempted to provide a comfortable house for the average family by advocating furnaces, dumbwaiters, speaking tubes, ventilators, and the use of glass and concrete as construction materials. He contested the use of fashionable architectural styles of the era and stressed form following function, of which the Naponee church, with its lack of stylistic vocabulary, is reflective. Fowler also recommended that the octagon be used for churches, schoolhouses, barns, and outbuildings.

The Naponee church was built in 1887, well after the period commonly perceived as Fowler's time of major influence. However, this is in keeping with the other known octagon structures in the state - the George F. Lee Octagon Houses in rural Otoe County (NRHP 11-23-77), which were built in the 1860's and '70's. Of interest is the Congregational association with each of these buildings. George F. Lee was active in the Congregational church statewide. He was a founder of his local church and a member of the founding committee and Board of Trustees of Doane College, a Congregational institution (Doane College Historic Buildings, Saline County, NRHP, 8-16-77).

The First Congregational Church was organized on May 15, 1881, with seven members, ten years after the organization of the county and the settlement of Naponee. Construction began in the spring of 1887, and the dedication service was held on July 10, 1887, by Rev. C. S. Harrison of Franklin. In the small community of Naponee, the number of members had been few throughout its history, and in 1973, the church was disbanded. The Naponee Historical Society acquired the property a few months later to preserve the building and provide a place for the display of community artifacts.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

# 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 0.33

Quadrangle name Republican City, NE

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	4	4	8	7	8	9	0	4	4	3	6	2	6	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

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

Commencing 33 feet west of NE corner of SE quarter of SE quarter of Section 5, Township 1 North, Range 16 West, running thence west 267 feet, thence south 54 feet, thence east 267 feet, thence north 54 feet to the place of beginning.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Penelope Chatfield, Preservation Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society

date December, 1980

street & number 1500 R Street

telephone 402/ 471-3270; 471-3850

city or town Lincoln

state Nebraska

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Marian W. Knecht*

12/15/80

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date

For HCRS use only

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

*Beth Garsen*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 9/14/82

Attest:  
Chief of Registration

date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JAN 7 1981

DATE ENTERED

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Fowler, Orson Squire. The Octagon House: A Home for All. New York: Dover, (1848), 1955.

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Naponee, Nebraska, Minutes of the Board, 1881-1971, Microfilm, MS 98, Nebraska State Historical Society Archives.

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Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1969.