

**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

For HCARS use only
received SEP 13 1982
date entered

1. Name

historic South Wild Rice Church
and/or common (St. John's Lutheran Church)

2. Location

SE of Galchutt at jct of US 81 & 8th

street & number Intersection of U.S. Highway 81 and Richland County Road # 8 not for publication
city, town Galchutt vic. X vicinity of congressional district 1
state North Dakota code 38 county Richland code 077

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Galchutt Lutheran Congregation
street & number N/A
city, town Galchutt vicinity of state North Dakota

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Richland County Courthouse, Register of Deeds Office
street & number N/A
city, town Wahpeton state North Dakota

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

North Dakota
title Cultural Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no
date March 25, 1981 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local
depository for survey records North Dakota Heritage Center, Division of Archeology & Historic Preservation
city, town Bismarck state North Dakota

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The South Wild Rice Church, not atypical of North Dakota's rural churches in terms of construction materials and design, is nonetheless unusual in its total use of wood as an interior surfacing material, presence of imposing wooden altar, altar screen and rail, pulpit and tester, and complementary use of three-centered arch ceilings in both nave and chancel. The church, though quite small, with a height of approximately fifty feet at the weathervane surmounting its steeple, can be seen for miles. Situated on a two acre site which also contains the church cemetery, the church is located slightly to the east of the Wild Rice River in the rich farmland of the Red River Valley. Constructed in 1883, the church retains an extraordinarily high degree of integrity in comparison with the majority of similarly aged rural churches in North Dakota; the only apparent changes consist of a bell tower which was added in 1897, an occasional coat of paint and the addition in 1941 of small wall mounted period light fixtures in the nave.

This gable-roofed, single story building is fifty-three feet long and twenty-eight feet wide, and has an eleven by twelve foot bell tower. Of wood frame construction, the church rests on a single course, dry-laid, uncut fieldstone foundation. Distinguishing exterior architectural features include four-over-four double-hung roman arch windows, four of which are equally spaced on both north and south elevations and which retain their original paired blinds, and one centered on the bell tower facade. Paired roman arch openings punctuate each bell turret elevation. Transition from bell tower to bell turret is defined by a pent roof with dentilled cornice, and a broached spire surmounts the bell turret. The exterior wall finish is lapped narrow wood siding. Access to the church vestibule is on the bell tower facade through paired raised panel two-over-two doors with a rectangular four-part fanlight. The same door configuration, except with semi-circular fanlight, separates vestibule from nave.

The primary distinguishing interior architectural features are complementary three-centered arch ceilings of nave and chancel; that of the chancel being somewhat lower than the nave. In each case, spring lines are defined by picture rails along the entire length of nave and chancel walls. The picture rails are emphasized through the use of mustard color paint which contrasts nicely with the white wood walls below, light-blue wood ceilings above, and the light gray wood floor. Simple but heavily molded roman arch windows and door surrounds are also mustard colored, as are the plain rectangular surrounds on doors leading from the chancel to its flanking sacristies and from sacristy to pulpit. A small balustraded choir platform is located in the southwest corner of the nave on the wall which forms the chancel arch. On the opposite side of the chancel arch are pulpit and tester. The chancel, its floor slightly higher than that of the nave, is completely dominated by a handsome altar, semi-circular balustraded altar rail, and wooden altar screen with its painting of Christ on the Cross. Along the north wall of the nave, and along the south wall behind a large wood burning stove, are grained pews facing the chancel arch.

Church land immediately to the west and south of the building continued in use as the church cemetery, and in the southwest corner of the two acre site is a small (four foot by eight foot) wood frame outhouse.

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 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 checked="" 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 1883 & 1897 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The significance of the South Wild Rice Church is derived primarily from 1) its association with North Dakota's early settlement period - in particular with early Norwegian immigration into and settlement of North Dakota's Red River Valley; 2) its association with individuals significant in Norwegian Lutheran Church history in North Dakota; and 3) as a remarkably intact survivor of Settlement period rural religious architecture in North Dakota.

Settlement of southeastern North Dakota, in what is now Richland County, began in earnest in the early 1870's. Primary impetus for settlement was the removal of the local American Indians to lands further west following an uprising in eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota during the 1860's, the existence of, and protection provided by, Ft. Abercrombie on the west bank of the Red River and the establishment of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba railhead at Breckenridge, Minnesota, which brought the fertile Red River Valley in closer touch with the more settled areas of Wisconsin, Iowa, and southern Minnesota.

By 1872 a fairly sizeable number of Norwegian immigrants had begun to settle in Wild Rice Township southwest of Ft. Abercrombie. With settlement there also came mission efforts of the various Norwegian Lutheran synodical bodies in the United States. During the fall of 1872 one of these mission organizers, the Rev. N. Th. Ylvisaker, left his home in Goodhue County, Minnesota, for the Red River Valley. After spending some time in Moorhead, Minnesota, having arrived by stage from the Breckenridge railhead, Ylvisaker ". . . left Moorhead the same evening with the stage. It was packed full of drunken railroad workers, both Irish and Norwegians, who were shouting, cursing and singing. I was bound for Fort Abercrombie, and from that place, after a couple of hours rest, with the pack on my back as in olden days I went on to the Norwegian settlement on the Wild Rice river, southwest of the fort at this place. . . . All the settlers were sent for by messengers, the settlement is not very large, and the majority came to the services. After the meeting was over the audience decided to organize a congregation . . . " ¹ Ylvisaker's effort was a fruitful one, for in December of 1872 the newly formed congregation met to adopt a constitution and choose a location for church and cemetery. The church, however, was not constructed until 1883; in the intervening years church services were conducted first in the homes of the various members and later in a log schoolhouse.

The congregation was only one of several in the southeastern corner of the state served by J. A. Hellestvedt, who settled in North Dakota in 1873, and was the first resident Norwegian Lutheran pastor in the state. His ministerial responsibilities in Cass and Richland Counties, including the South Wild Rice Congregation, were assumed in 1879 by R. J. Wisnaes, whose ministry extended well into the 1920's.

¹Anton Hillesland, "The Norwegian Lutheran Church in the Red River Valley," Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, VII, p. 248, quoting Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende, March 18, 1879.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2 acres

Quadrangle name Abercrombie

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	4	6	7	4	0	7	5	5	1	3	8	9	5	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 Beginning at the NE corner of Section 32, Township 134 North, Range 48 West running thence west along said Section line for a distance of 264 feet, thence south and parallel with the east boundary line of said Section for a distance of 330 feet, thence east and parallel with the north boundary line of said Section (con't)

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Louis N. Hafermehl, Director,
Division of Archeology and Historic Preservation

organization State Historical Society of North Dakota date 5/15/82

street & number North Dakota Heritage Center telephone (701)224-2672

city or town Bismarck state North Dakota 58505

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 James E. Sherry

title State Historic Preservation Officer date August 17, 1982

For HCRS use only

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

Beth Grovome date 10/22/82
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

In October of 1881, nine years after the congregation was established, and with six and a half dollars in the church treasury, a construction date was established for the following spring, basic dimensions for the building were decided upon (though later increased) and a committee formed to gather construction funds.

Not until June of 1883, however, was construction advanced enough for meetings to be held in the new church building. In that month a committee was established "to collect money so work on /the/ church building could be completed as soon as possible," and, to protect their existing investment, two members were selected "to plow around the church as protection against prairie fire."²

The South Wild Rice Church ceased being used for regular services in 1956, and is used today only occasionally for baptisms and marriages. The cemetery, in which the first interment occurred in 1877, continued to be used as a burial ground.

The South Wild Rice Church meets National Register Criteria consideration (a) as listed at 36 CFR 60.4. While the building is clearly important in the history of Norwegian Lutheranism in North Dakota, its significance for purposes of this nomination stems from its association with, and as a reflection of, the early settlement of south-eastern North Dakota. Of the buildings surveyed and recorded to date in Richland County, the South Wild Rice Church is perhaps directly associated with a greater number of the first wave of Norwegian settlers and retains greater integrity than any other church building in the region.

2. South Wild Rice Church Minutes, June 8, 1883.

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

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 2

Herigstad, Oman B. "Norwegian Immigration." Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, II, 1908, 186-201.

Hillesland, Anton. "The Norwegian Lutheran Church in the Red River Valley." Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, VII. 1925 195-283.

Tollefson, Axel. "Historical Notes on the Norwegians in the Red River Valley." Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, VII. 1925, 133-191.

Torvend, C. S. "Early Norwegian Emigration and Its Causes," Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, III. 1910, 310-320.

Tweto, Alma. "History of Abercrombie Township, Richland County," Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, III. 1910, 158-177.

Minutes of South Wild Rice Church, 27 December 1872 - 8 June 1883, provided by Horace C. Johnson, 374 Elmwood Avenue, Fargo, North Dakota 58103.

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

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 10.

Page 3

Verbal boundary description and justification continued.

for a distance of 264 feet, thence north along east boundary line of said Section to the place of beginning.