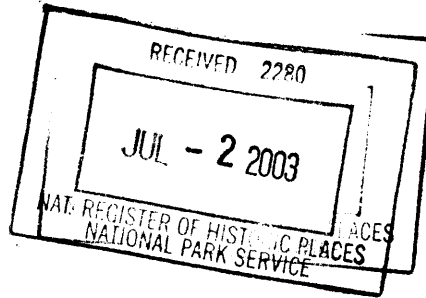


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**



1745

JUN 27 2003

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church

other names/site number Smithtown Church

2. Location

street & number 1223 125th Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Lost Nation [X] vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Clinton code 045 zip code 52254

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (see continuation sheet for additional comments).

Howell J. Burke June 30, 2003
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- 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:)

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Name of Property

Clinton County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/Meeting Hall

RECREATION/CULTURE/Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian/Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls Wood/weatherboard

roof asphalt

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Name of Property

Clinton County, Iowa
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/Settlement
Religion

Period of Significance

1874-1915

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

1874

1875

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Kleis, Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: Clinton County CLG

Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church

Name of Property

Clinton County, Iowa

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 [1]5 [6]7[7]6[7]0 [4]6[5]1[2]8[0]
Zone Easting Northing

2 []
Zone Easting Northing

3 []

4 []

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen

organization History Pays! date June 24, 2003

street & number 4411 Ingersoll Avenue telephone 515-274-3625

city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50312

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Clinton County Conservation Board, c/o Al Griffiths, Executive Director

street & number P. O. Box 68 telephone 563-847-7202

city or town Grand Mound state Iowa zip code 52751-0068

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
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Section number 7 Page 1 **Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**

7. Narrative Description:

The Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church is a well-preserved and early (1874) surviving example of an Italianate style frame rural church. Its framing represents a combination of heavy timber and western framing building techniques. The overbuilt attic truss system is an unexpected example of vernacular large building construction that persisted despite the presumed dominance of balloon framing. The church is extremely well-preserved both inside and out, and it also retains an impressive array of interior built-in appointments and all of its original fixtures and furniture. The church is located in the northwest township of Clinton County. Maquoketa, in adjacent Jackson County, is the closest larger town.

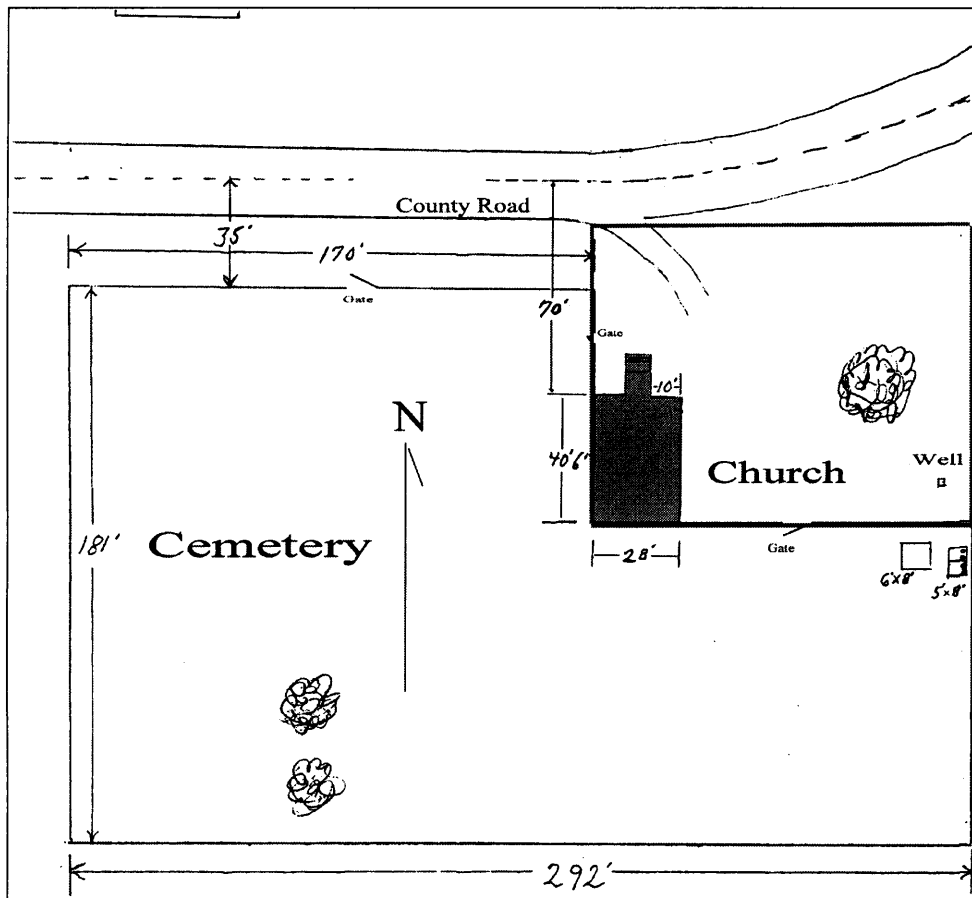


Figure 1: Site Map (black boundary denotes National Register boundary)
(drawn by Floyd Soenksen)

The church is located on the east end of a large rural cemetery. The building front orients to the north. The building site is elevated above the road that runs past the church to the north. The bank raises about 15 feet above the road level. As Figure 1 above indicates the church is not associated with any other outbuildings. Two small outbuildings located to the southeast are associated with the cemetery and are located on that separately owned property.

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Section number 7 Page 2 **Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**

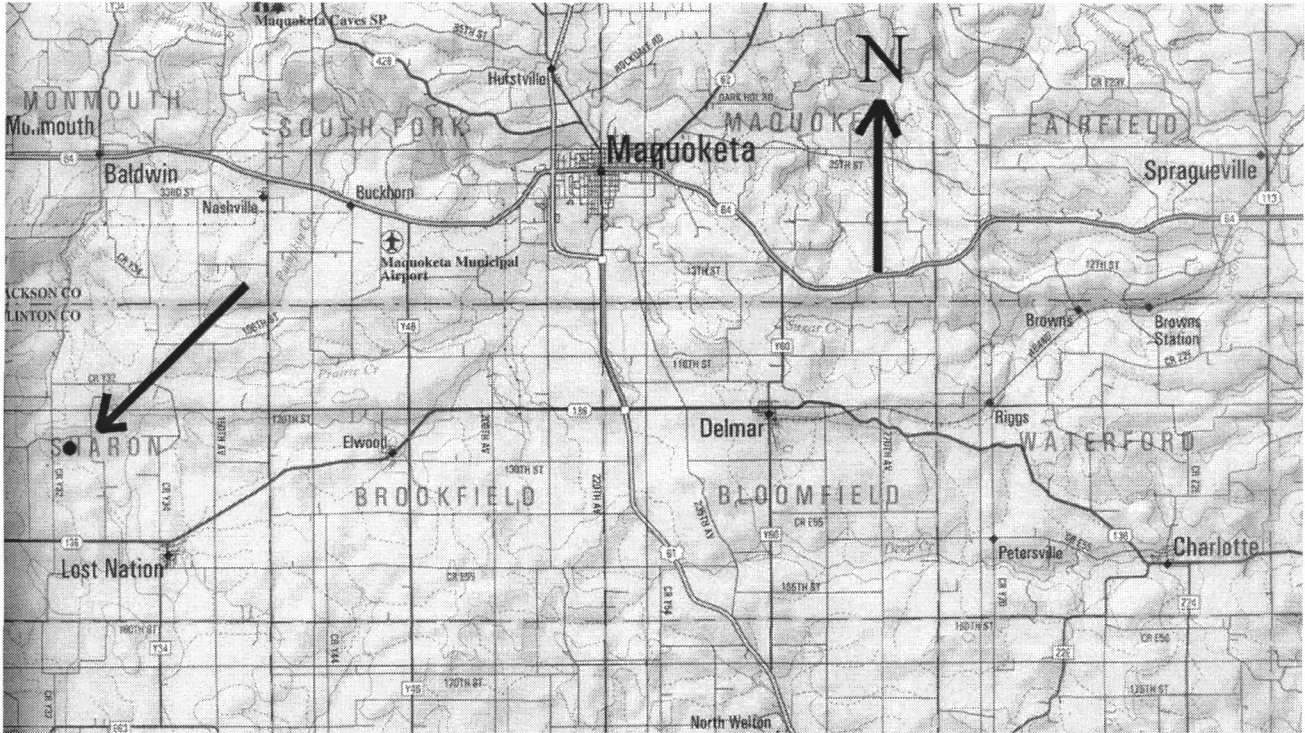


Figure 2: Location map, Sharon Church (Iowa Atlas and Gazetteer, 2001)
The arrow locates the church property.

Figure 2 locates the church that is located in the northwesternmost township of Clinton County. Maquoketa, in adjacent Jackson County, is the closest larger town. Lost Nation is southeast from the church and Elwood is due east. These buildings trace the former route of the area railroad.

The building footprint is a basic rectangle that measures 40.5x28 feet. The square tower is centered on the north end (front) of the plan and measures 8x8. The core mass of the plan is that of a front gable form. The eaves are 16 feet above the ground level. The gable end is 28 feet in elevation. There is a square brick chimney centered on the south (rear) wall and it projects above the roof ridge.

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Section number 7 Page 3 **Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**



Figure 3: Sharon/Smithtown Church, general view from north of the county road
(photo by Floyd Soenksen, October 2002)

Most of the exterior wall is not open for a structural inspection but a floor opening made it possible to inspect the frame foundation system. The surprising feature was the use of a 6x6 heavy timber sill into which 2x8 floor joists were recessed using a mortise and tenon framing technique. This heavy sill was likely helpful when the building received its new concrete wall foundation in 1930. The original foundation, of either stone or brick, is completely removed. Some type of support was provided for and the building was otherwise placed over a very shallow crawlspace and a dirt sub-floor.

The same heavy timber system was utilized in the corners and plate of the plan, and the whole building therefore represents an amalgam of heavy timber and western framing building techniques. Heavy planks, set diagonally, reinforce the tower.

The structural surprise is the attic truss system. Quite simply put, the attic framing scheme consists of 28 trusses, spaced 16 inches apart. Each "truss" consists of a vertical 2x6 planks set along the centerline, twin 1x6 planks set at a 45-degree angle (see Figures 4-6, next two pages) into the centerline of each roof plane, all of which are nailed into 2x8 stringers and 2x6 rafters. Clearly this apparently overbuilt structural system was thought necessary to provide a clear span sanctuary (26x40) ceiling and space, and to hold the building true against winds and snow loads. One can literally picture this attic unit surviving intact if it was torn off of the church. The large amount of labor and materials necessary to build this feature would have represented a good proportion of the total building cost.

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Figure 4: Attic framing, vertical 2x6 posts run down center of plan, angled struts join midway with roof
Tower framing visible in background, view northward along east side of attic
(photo by Floyd Soenksen)



Figure 5: Attic framing, vertical 2x6 posts run down center of plan, angled struts join midway with roof
Back or south wall is visible in background, view southward along west side of attic
(photo by Floyd Soenksen)

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Section number 7 Page 5 **Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**

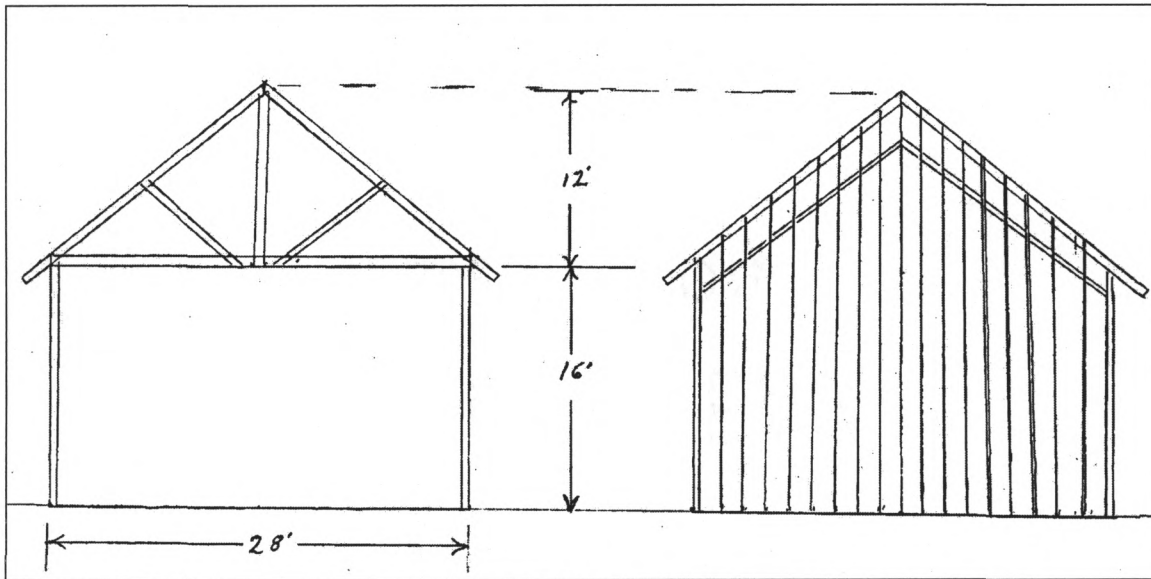


Figure 6: End wall framing, right-hand sketch depicts stud pattern
(plan drawing by Floyd Soenksen)

The attic support system is integrated into a very strong end wall framing scheme. Studs are substantial (2x6) with a 16-inch spacing. A secondary line of 2x4 supports are nailed parallel to and several feet below the rafter lines (see Figure 6, above).



Figure 7: View from the southwest toward the church
(photo by Floyd Soenksen, October 2002)

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**Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**



Figure 8: Tower detail, showing painted plaque that reads "Sharon ME Church A.D. 1874"
(photo by Floyd Soenksen, October 2002)

The church retains its original narrow wood clapboard exterior cladding. Corner boards are used throughout the plan. There is no insulation within the walls. The soffits are simply boxed. The gable end soffits are elaborated with several layers of moldings. All of the door and window lintels are executed with a simple gabled pediment (Figures 9, 11, below and page 7).

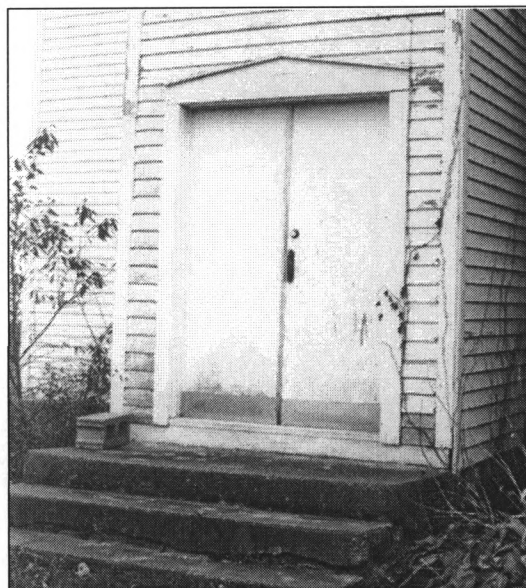


Figure 9: Front door detail
(photo by Floyd Soenksen)

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**Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**

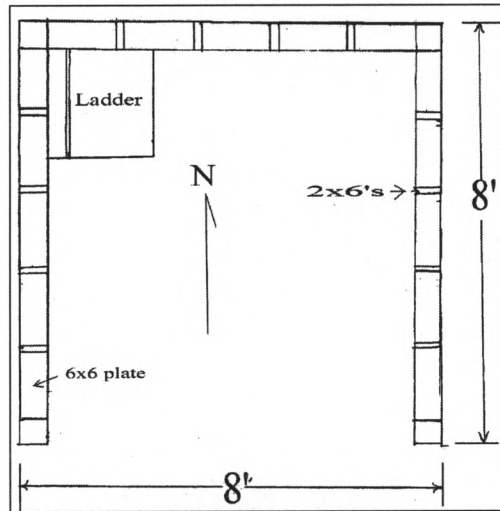


Figure 10: Tower floor plan sketch, with hatch, attached ladder, and wall framing details
(plan drawing by Floyd Soenksen)

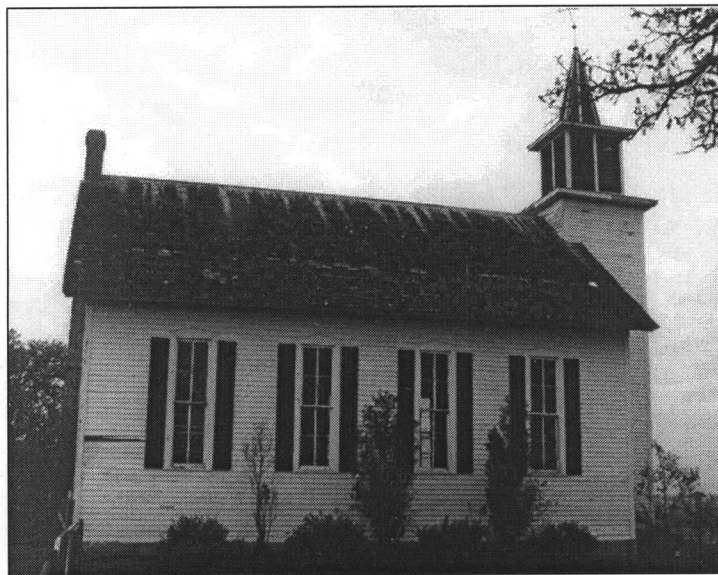


Figure 11: East sidewall, view west
(photo by Floyd Soenksen)

The narrow elongated windows, evenly spaced along each sidewall, with the original 2/2 lights, assigns the otherwise vernacular design to the late Victorian Italianate style. Functioning full-length louvered shutters survive as well (Figure 11, above).

The sanctuary space (Figure 12, page 8) is very impressive (26'10" x 39') and conveys the clear message that the congregations that used this church were quite large. The broad clear span is made possible by the roof truss system already described. The provision of this large space to meet the need to house very large groups is further

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Section number 7 Page 8 **Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**

documented by the use of a most unusual system of perimeter folding benches. As Figure 13 (page 8) indicates, the rear wall benches were permanent, being lids to storage boxes beneath them, while the side wall benches could be set up by folding out hinged supports. When not in use, the system disappeared into the sidewalls almost like a wainscoting feature.

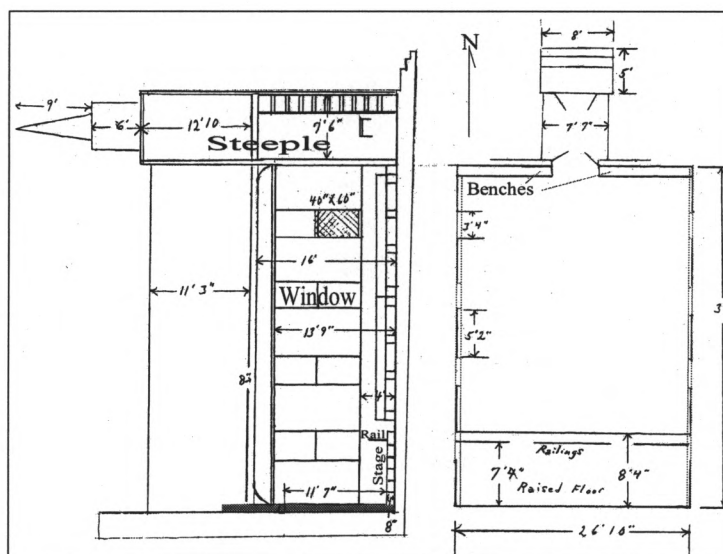


Figure 12: Elevation sketch (left side) and core floor plan (plan drawing by Floyd Soenksen)¹

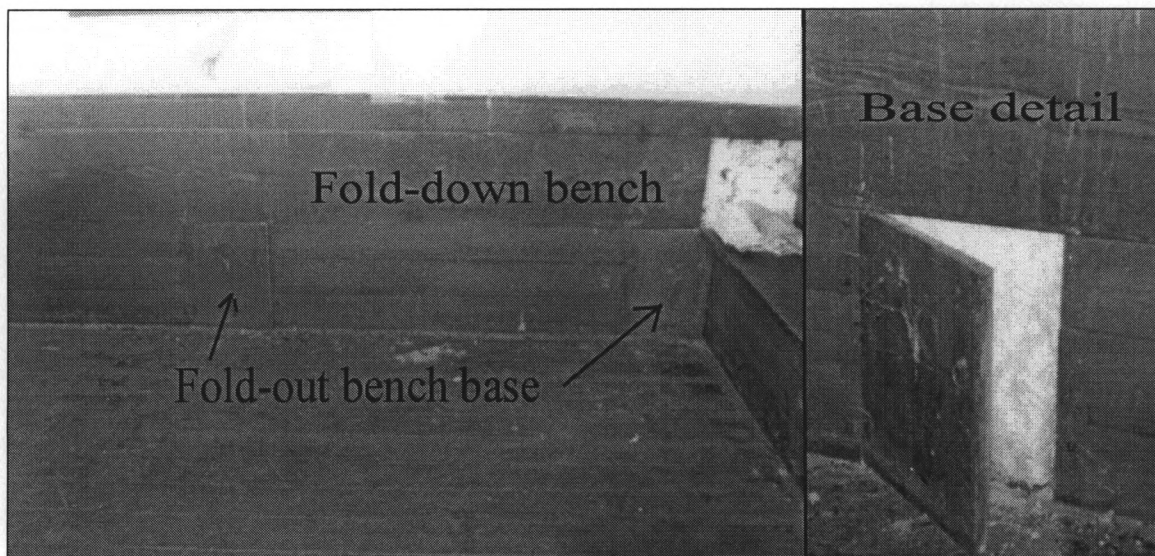


Figure 13: Temporary bench system, two superimposed photos (photos by Floyd Soenksen)

¹Elevations are estimated. The original plan drawings are on file with the Clinton County Conservation Board.

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Figure 13 (page 8) illustrates the overall extent of the bench system, the coved ceiling, and the spacing of the full-length side windows. Historically double rows of pews were arranged with a center and side aisles. The chandelier (Figure 14, below) was centered on the sanctuary plan. A stove (Figures 17, 19, below and page 12) was offset to the east of the center aisle and a stovepipe was angled to a hole that was centered on the south wall.



Figure 14: Original chandelier (patent date January 7, 1873), view to the southwest
(photo by Floyd Soenksen)

The chandelier used and continues to use a series of oil lamps to produce light. It has never been electrified. Figure 14 also depicts the acoustical tile that covers the decorative metal ceiling. It also shows the broadly coved edges of the ceiling. The stove (Figure 15, below) is one artifact that pre-dates the church or might have. It is inscribed 1872-Hickory #20, H (?) Rathebone & Company, Albany, New York.”



Figure 15: Original wood stove used to heat church, now disconnected
(photo by Floyd Soenksen)

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Clinton County, Iowa**

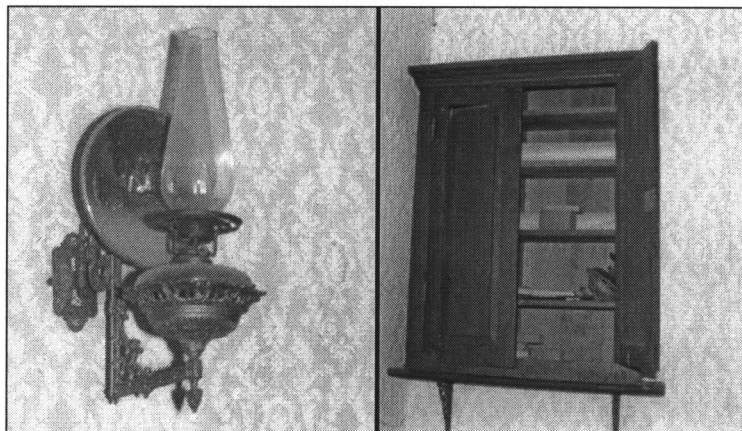


Figure 16: Original oil lamp and reflector wall mount (left), original cabinet (right)
(photos by Floyd Soenksen)

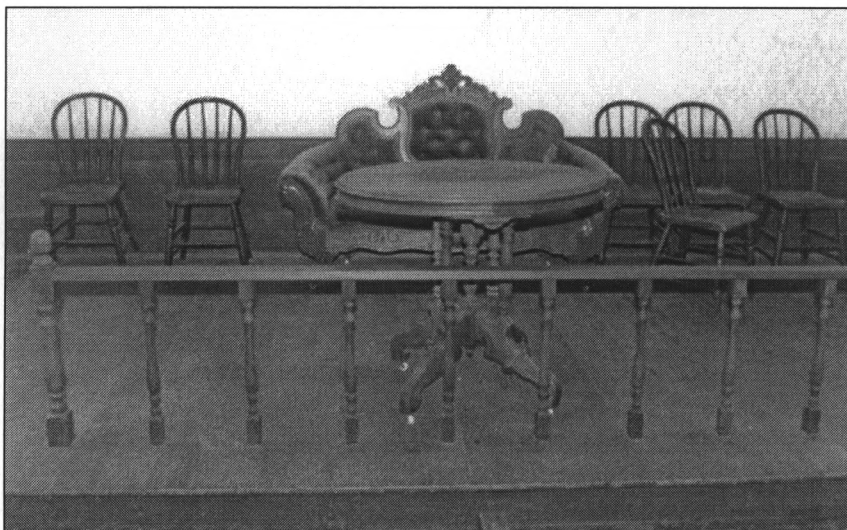


Figure 17: Raised stage and railing at south end of sanctuary (see floor plan)
(photo by Floyd Soenksen)

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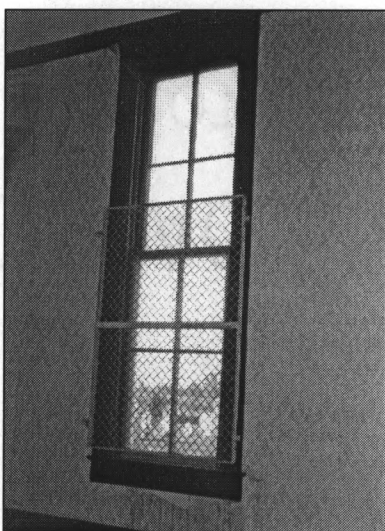


Figure 18: Window detail, view to the southwest
(photo by Floyd Soenksen)



Figure 19: Undated church interior photo
("Memories of Smithtown")

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Clinton County, Iowa**

Figure 19 (page 10) documents the historic church interior and shows the raised stage (8'4"x26'10") (the carpet runner somewhat hides the rise) and many of the current furnishings in place. The picture presumably dates to the period of active services. The organ is obviously functional and there is a large lamp or perhaps a metal cross on a wall mount that is centered on the south wall and appears in this picture to be a part of the chandelier. Note the stove location and the piping. There is carpet on the floor. The same pews, couch, chairs, and organ remain in the church today. It is quite remarkable that the church retains its original or very early furnishings, some of which (the couch) are not usually found in a church setting.



Figure 20: Earliest view of Sharon Church, said to date to 1890 but appears to be post-1907 (post card, courtesy of Mrs. Louise Busch, Maquoketa)

Figure 20 offers the earliest known photograph of the church. The large tombstone visible in front of the tower is that of Dan Hurlburt, who died in early 1907. This view of the church steeple depicts the original tower steeple and weathervane. Note that the present commemorative plaque, and a single belfry window (intact but covered today) were present at this time ("Memories of Smithtown"). Note also the presence of a wooden stake fence and the absence of any trees (the mature trees which still stand northeast of the church were present but are out of the view).

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Clinton County, Iowa**

Note that no outbuildings are present to the east of the church. The chimney has a decorative cap and might be the original interior stack, but this cannot be decisively determined by this image.



Figure 21: 1959 photograph with view to the southeast
Walther Carstens, Lisbon, photographer, Cedar Rapids *Gazette*, March 21, 1969)

Figure 21 depicts the church without its original steeple. The shutters are closed.



Figure 22: 1973 photo, view to the southeast (Davenport *Times-Democrat*, October 28, 1973)

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Figure 23: 1977 photo showing the replacement of the spire and base tower, view southwest
(*Lost Nation Press*, June 29, 1977)



Figure 24: c.1977 photo showing completed restoration
("Memories of Smithtown")

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Section number 7 Page 15 **Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**

Alterations to the church building:



Figure 25: Attic view through former internal chimney passage, showing back side of coved metal roof on south end of sanctuary

Figure 25 illustrates two early alterations to the church interior. The rectangular gap in the ceiling framing at the south end of the church, along with mortar line marks evident on interior surface of the back wall, document the presence of either an interior brick chimney or a hung or suspended partial chimney. The chimney passed through the opening in the floor on the inside of the back wall. The same figure confirms the existence of a coved pressed metal ceiling above the sanctuary. The lowermost edge of this ceiling remains exposed in the sanctuary and the image shows that it fully covered the ceiling and its broadly coved edges. This ceiling was apparently covered with acoustical tiles during the 1970 remodeling period.

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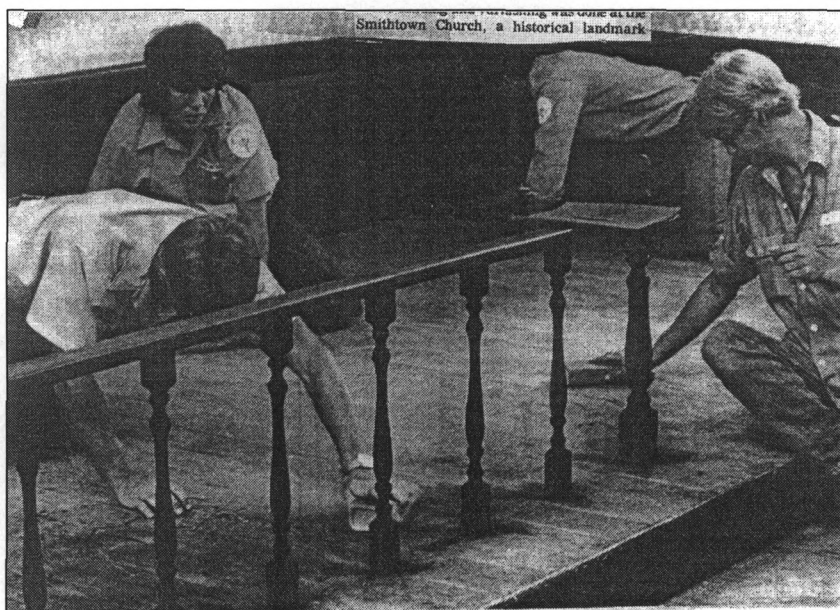


Figure 26: Floor refinishing by County Youth Corps, 1984
(DeWitt *Observer*, August 18, 1984)

Churches commonly were remodeled late in the 19th century as later generations accumulated wealth as area farms became more successful. The Sharon church very likely was so adorned with the installation of an elaborate pressed metal ceiling. It is unlikely that the ceiling was original to the new church although it is certainly possible. The principal reason for a metal ceiling was for fire protection and the congregation could have reduced its fire insurance costs by installing such a ceiling. The later date for the ceiling is hinted at given the change in the chimney arrangement, previously discussed.

The church was re-roofed in 1930 and it was placed upon a new concrete foundation. The foundation is more exposed at its northeast corner due to the lay of the ground. A vent or access was located in the northwest front corner. Half inch boards used as moldboards on the interior, remain in place. There is a very small crawlspace beneath the church and no indication that it is accessible.

The original spire was removed, apparently due to deterioration. It is possible that this was done as part of the 1930s work, given that the building was also re-roofed and probably raised to allow for the foundation work. It is also possible that storm damage required its removal. An inspection of the upper reaches of the base tower indicates that lumber in that area has been replaced. Usually this pattern would represent post-storm or fire damage (no fire damage is apparent). The replacement at this level was not a part of the 1977 work.

The church was again re-roofed in 1970 and the building was developed for museum and meeting purposes between that year and 1973. Inside, floors were refinished and the windows were repaired. The ceiling was covered and a new (presumably front) door was installed. The sanctuary was re-papered. The tower base front window was covered with a piece of wood.

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Section number 7 Page 17 **Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**



Figure 27: Window repair by County Youth Corps, 1984
(DeWitt *Observer*, August 18, 1984)

On the church grounds there was a horse barn of uncertain construction and demolition dates. A 1959 progress report hints that demolition occurred at that time. There is no information available as to the barn's location, scale or appearance. A two-hole privy and a shed are located on the east end of the cemetery property, and are excluded from this nomination. Both are of recent (less than 50 years) origin.

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Clinton County, Iowa**

8. Significance Statement:

The Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church (1874) is historically significant on the local level and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons: It is historically significant because it is the last-surviving building from the hamlet community of Burgess-Smithtown (Criterion A) and because it represents a successful long-term cross-cultural cooperation between two congregations which shared the same church building throughout its history (1875-World War I).

The associated cemetery was not included in this nomination because it is under separate ownership from the church and there is no local desire to list the cemetery. The cemetery offers no special or distinctive design features and while the older portion of the cemetery is close to the church, that area is quite intermixed with newer and intrusive markers.

The History of Burgess/Smithtown:

A significance argument that links a last-surviving building to a now vanished community requires that (a) the community was substantial enough to warrant the significance, and (b) that the building was built during the significant period of the community's life. The village/hamlet of Burgess/Smithtown was an important service and shipping point and enjoyed its hay day from 1854 until 1888 (the period during which its post office functioned). While being bypassed by the railroad (1871-72) sealed its fate, the community maintained much of its "vigor" until c.1900. The Sharon M. E. Church, which dates to 1874, was built during the community's heyday and represented the collective efforts of its dominant resident Methodist faith and its ministers and officers included many of the villages' elite. The establishment of the associated cemetery (excluded from this nomination) replaced an earlier burial place at the west end of the village.

The hamlet town of Burgess developed in 1854 with the awarding of a post office on September 4 of that year. The village site lay astride two important early state roads. The Dubuque-Garryowen-Tipton Road ran north/south through the west end of the hamlet. The Camanche-Anamosa Road was surveyed in September 1851, was 64 miles in length, and ran the length of Burgess. The settlement of the hamlet was the result of the intersection of these main roads. Area Anglo European settlement in this northwest corner township of Clinton County dated to 1844. By the mid-1850s there was sufficient population to warrant the convenience of a post office and an effort was made to obtain one under the name of Lima. Burgess was substituted given that that name was taken. The post office retained that name until it was closed on January 31, 1889. Iowa State Gazetteers use that name as well, although the 1865 edition cross-references the name Smithtown to the Burgess entry (Cook, Smithtown Church History; Ramsey; Secretary of State, Original Territorial Roads, Plats and Field Notes, File 8, State Archives).

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Section number 8

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**Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**



Figure 28: 1865 Township Map Detail

The 1865 map (Figure 28) highlights the Camanche-Anamosa territorial road which joins the Dubuque-Iowa City post road (which runs north south along the west edge of the map). The most notable caravan to use the latter was a 20-oxen team that was hauling a boiler to Denver, Colorado. Blacksmith David Smith's name (note arrow that points to his name) is prominent and buildings cluster at the intersection of the two roads. John C. Boman was the original postmaster at Burgess. As of 1865 the village had two churches (Disciples, Methodist) and the township had 500 residents. The township was described as being equal in "prairie and oak openings." Cook says there was a creamery in operation and that J. B. Current had a general store in the east wing of the Methodist parsonage. The Story of Sharon states that there was a Civil War-era militia unit that drilled on the streets of the village. By 1880, David Smith was the postmaster, a justice and a blacksmith. Smith was also the minister for the Methodist church. George C. Read was operating a hotel. The village population was 100 persons and there was a weekly stage and mail

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from Lost Nation, the area rail shipping point (Ramsey; 1865 Iowa State Gazetteer, p. 143; 1880-81 Iowa State Gazetteer, pp. 85, 50; Cook).²

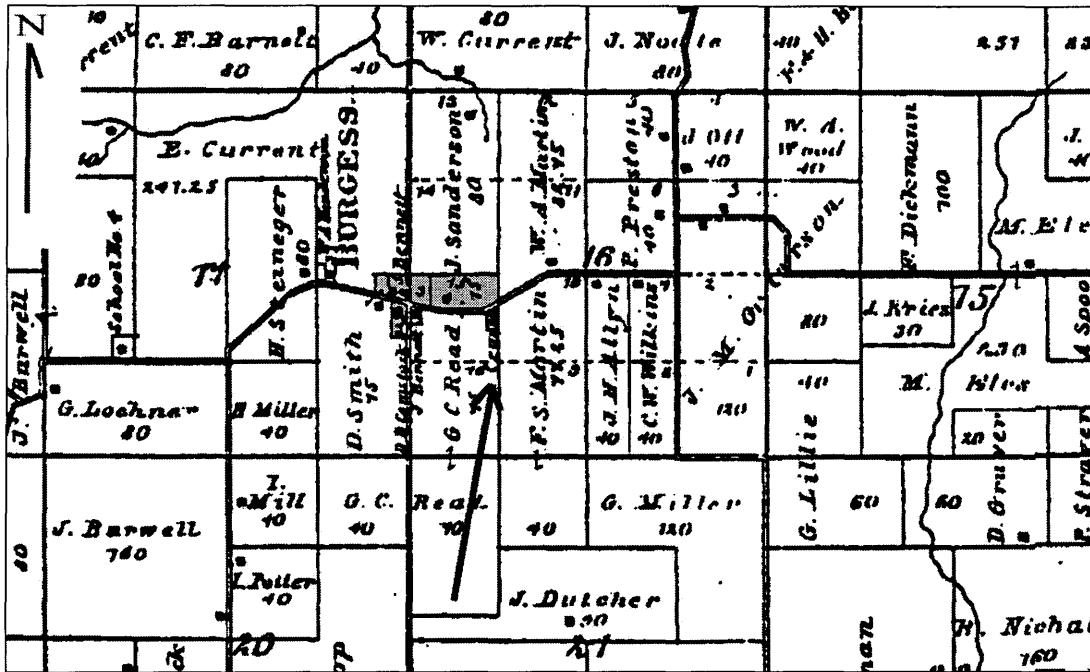


Figure 29: 1874 Township Map detail (village lots shaded)

The 1874 map (Figure 29) clearly showed Burgess and its clustering of buildings. The arrow points to the newly completed church. The 1882-83 Iowa State Gazetteer said little about Burgess, which still had its weekly mail and stage service. C. V. Cook was justice of the peace, Rev. David Smith continued to preach for the Methodists and no postmaster was listed. The 1884-85 volume was more descriptive, referring to the hamlet as a “small place” that was first settled in 1850. It shipped livestock and produce. George C. Read was postmaster. The twice-weekly stage and mail to Lost Nation required a 25 cents fare. There was just one church, the Methodist Episcopal Church. The 1887-88 edition identified the postmistress as Miss May Martin. The Methodists now had Rev. M. A. Goodell at their service. The twice-weekly stage continued in operation. The 1889-90 Iowa State Gazetteer offered two changes to the previous report. Current & Sanderson were cattle breeders at Burgess and the Methodists had Rev. J. R. A. Hanner as their minister. This was the final entry for Burgess (1882-83 Iowa State Gazetteer, p. 169; 1884-85 Iowa State Gazetteer; 1887-88 Iowa State Gazetteer, p. 191; 1889-90 Iowa State Gazetteer, p. 190; 1882-83 Iowa State Gazetteer).

The 1879 county history indicates that Sharon Township lagged in settlement due to a lack of timber and surface water. The northwest part of the township was particularly rough and broken. There were two early churches

² David Smith was born c.1811, died October 1, 1884 and was buried at the Smithtown Cemetery. His widow Agnes (1821-1907) survived him by 22 years, was also buried there.

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in the township. A Swedenborgian congregation, titled the Church of the New Jerusalem, was located in the northwest corner of the township, while a Baptist congregation of German Dunkards, resided northeast from Burgess and likely worshipped in their neighborhood area. Burgess was one of two post offices and at that time boasted a store, blacksmith shop, and the early makings of “a business point.” The arrival of the Sabula, Ackley & Dakota Railroad³ in late 1871, which was routed along the southern part of the township, resulted in the establishment of the station town of Lost Nation, four miles to the southeast of Burgess. There, by 1879 “quite a thriving little village” had grown up and the commercial vitality of Burgess had been drained away to that point. The major loss was the general store firm of Dwight D. Comstock, who moved his store to Lost Nation. Comstock’s partner, J. N. Wood had served for some years as a county supervisor. Comstock had operated his store in Burgess from 1866 until 1871 when the railroad arrived at Lost Nation. Carson Cram ran a store in Burgess (1879 Clinton County History, pp. 646-47).

The railroad didn’t proceed beyond the Lost Nation area until 1872 and it wasn’t until July 3, 1872 that the Lost Nation plat was recorded. Still, once an east-bound export shipping point was established at the new town, it would have drawn stock and other produce towards that point and effectively ended overland shipping from points like Burgess (The Story of Sharon).

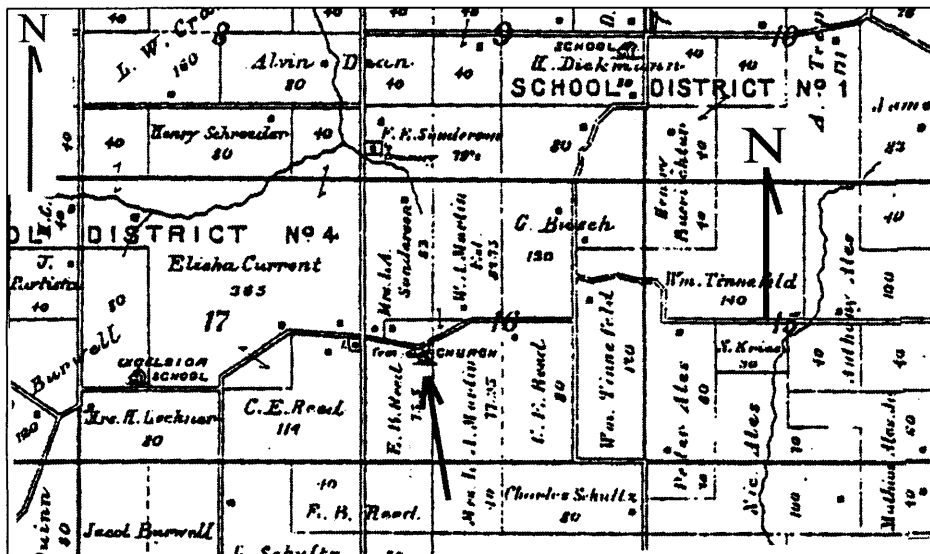


Figure 30: 1894 Township Map detail

The town of Burgess did not disappear immediately. Burgess had a nine-member band as late as 1892 and the band had a bandwagon that required four horses to haul it to points as distant as Maquoketa. The existence of a band of this size indicates that a considerable population remained at the village site as late as the early 1890s. The village had a Keystone Telephone Company office in a local farmhouse beginning in 1908 (ibid., History of Clinton County, 1976).

³ The railroad was incorporated in mid-1870 and became the Milwaukee & St. Paul in mid-1872. Its arrival in Sharon Township coincided with the great fires in Chicago and Wisconsin, and the Franco Prussian War in Europe. Its local impact was hampered by lengthy delays in extending it west to any important point (Clinton County History, 1978, p. 85).

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Another long-enduring village institution was the Good Templar Sharon Valley Lodge #290, a charitable and benevolent pro-temperance organization, which eventually had its own two-story hall. It was organized in 1866 and first met in the schoolhouse. There were 47 male and female members as of 1875. Articles of Incorporation were filed on January 25, 1876 and the deed for their hall was filed for record on February 15, 1876. The lodge leased the first floor to Dr. A. Hansen in 1877-78 for \$2.00 monthly. They next met in a large frame building that housed Comstock's general store and the post office. The members continued to meet as late as 1900 but sold off their hall in April 1894 (Cook; Lodge Trustees Account Book; "Memories of Smithtown").

Burgess is remembered today as Smithtown, an unofficial name that derived from the local notoriety of David Smith. This name was in circulation as early as 1865 and was listed as an alternative name for Burgess in the Iowa State Gazetteer of that year. The post office designation continued to use Burgess and the Iowa State Gazetteer followed suit, but locals appear to have preferred Smithtown.

The History of Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church:

The historical significance of the Sharon Church is based on the fact that two diverse religious congregations successfully cooperated for a period of some 40 years, using the same facility for their regular religious services. The common ground that allowed for this feat was likely a common commitment to the temperance movement. This made the Methodists willing to work with the area Germans, who otherwise were not always accepted. There is also a probable link to the financial depression of the early 1870s which made it necessary for the two congregations to share the costs of supporting the newly-built church. This cooperative effort paralleled one predating it by one year in Lost Nation. There the two groups actually built a church together.

Early area Methodists first met, c.1856, in the Methodist Parsonage, a three-room building that was located south of the principal village intersection. It variously held Current's general store (located in the "east wing"), the public school, and Sunday School meetings and church services. Circuit riding preachers served the small congregation. Beginning May 5, 1858 and continuing through 1870, surviving records document the use of a small log school building, located just north of the main intersection of the village, for church and Sunday school services. The congregation was a member of the Upper Iowa Conference of the Methodist Church and was supplied with circuit riding ministers from the Monmouth Circuit (Cook; Smithtown Church And Cemetery).

A Sunday school was first organized in May 1858 with J. Jones as its first superintendent and there were nine teachers. L. Fish was the church librarian and the library consisted of 59 volumes. The Sabbath School reorganized on June 5, 1859, with Mr. B. Nichols as superintendent, and C. K. Sanderson librarian. The June 10, 1860 reorganization placed F. Martin in charge as superintendent, aided by Assistant Superintendent William Allyn, and librarian B. Nichols. M. N. Henry was Superintendent in 1862. Samuel J. McMillan was the librarian as of 1867. There are registers of the number of memorized Bible verses for the Sharon Sunday School of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 1879, 1881, 1883 and 1886. Sunday School records also cover the years 1888-1908. An entry dated November 4, 1888, indicated that "diphtheria in the neighborhood" had precluded holding school. Women were more commonly serving as Sunday School officers (Eva Read, secretary and treasurer in 1893; Carrie Hulbert,

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secretary and librarian and Miss Lena Cram, organist, in 1896; Gertie Kammer, 1898; Fanie Kammer secretary and Mamie Reed treasurer, 1900, Elna Sanderson, secretary, 1899; Ethel Current, 1907; and a Mrs. Current was superintendent in 1908. Frankie Clapp was then assistant superintendent, Emma Hurlburt was treasurer). A report for the 1909 Sunday School recorded three teachers, 19 scholars, and three officers present for the opening class on May 2, 1909. The collection netted \$.96. Rev. Potter was the minister at the time. The extensive Sunday School and church library records of the church represent the centrality of those components to the Methodist Episcopal faith. Addie Wardel traced the development of the Sunday school (including adult education) within the church. Her history records the same types of record keeping in churches all across the nation (Wardel; Church archives).

Temperance was a central theme of the Sabbath School and a Temperance Banner was secured in mid-December 1872. Twenty subscriptions to the Sunday School Advocate magazine were ordered in January 1873. The library continued to be important to the congregation. By this time F. S. Martin chaired a library committee with five members and the collection numbered 70 books. A book catalogue was added to the library. An 1869 Sunday School roster recorded 50 student names. An April 25, 1875 roster recorded four teachers, 35 "scholars," three visitors and three officers, for a total of 45 persons. Clearly the numbers had diminished since 1869, but the institution remained strong (Church archives).

The first village cemetery was located on the north end of the hamlet, on the west side of the road. This ground was vacated when the new cemetery was established and the graves were relocated next to the church. The Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church was incorporated in 1865 with trustees David Smith, F. S. Martin, Owen Hopkins, George C. Read, and F. C. Mills. On January 4, 1865, Trustee Read donated land for cemetery and church grounds. The cemetery and church deeds were separately prepared and filed, the former document being filed for record April 8, 1865, the latter filed on November 17, 1865. Subsequent land transfer dates took place between Trustee Read and the church trustees on November 23 and December 20, 1867. The transfer of an additional 1.5 acres was recorded on December 2, 1878. Read made yet another transfer to the trustees on September 17, 1885 (Cook; Church archives; *Gazette*; "Memories of Smithtown").

It would take nine years to build the church, but it is said that the cemetery was immediately put to use. Accepting the 1868 date for opening the cemetery, there were 14 burials which pre-dated that year. Four burials dated to 1868, all of these burials being infants or children. Five deaths dated to 1853-58 and nine to the Civil War years. One probable reason for the delay in building a church was the arrival of the nearby railroad and the resulting reduction of community energy, c.1871-72. Lost Nation Methodists also acted in 1874 to build a Union Sabbath School Church, so it would appear that the two congregations acted in some degree of coordination. The Lost Nation building also combined two congregations, the local Methodists and the Church of New Jerusalem or Swedenborgians, and it is possible that this idea prompted the same approach at the New Sharon church. Seventy-six families are recorded as having contributed labor and funds for the new church. A Mr. Kleis, formerly from Tipton in

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nearby Cedar County, was hired to supervise the building construction.⁴ The cost of building the church, presumably the hard cash cost, was \$1,800 (1879 History of Clinton County, p. 647; Smithtown Church And Cemetery History).

Clearly the Methodists first attempted to build a church of their own. It wasn't until a year after the building was finished, on November 16, 1875, that they entered into an agreement with the Saint John Reformed Church congregation, composed of Germans, to share the building on alternate Sundays. The Germans most importantly contributed \$440 towards church expenses. It is more than probable that the national economic depression of those years provided the impetus for cooperation. The agreement gave the Germans a one-quarter lease of the church building. The agreement was a perpetual one, providing the building "forever or as long as they desire to use it for the purpose of a house of worship." The service schedule was weekly on Sunday mornings by the Methodists, and alternative Sunday afternoons by the Reformed church (Smithtown Church And Cemetery History; *Gazette*).

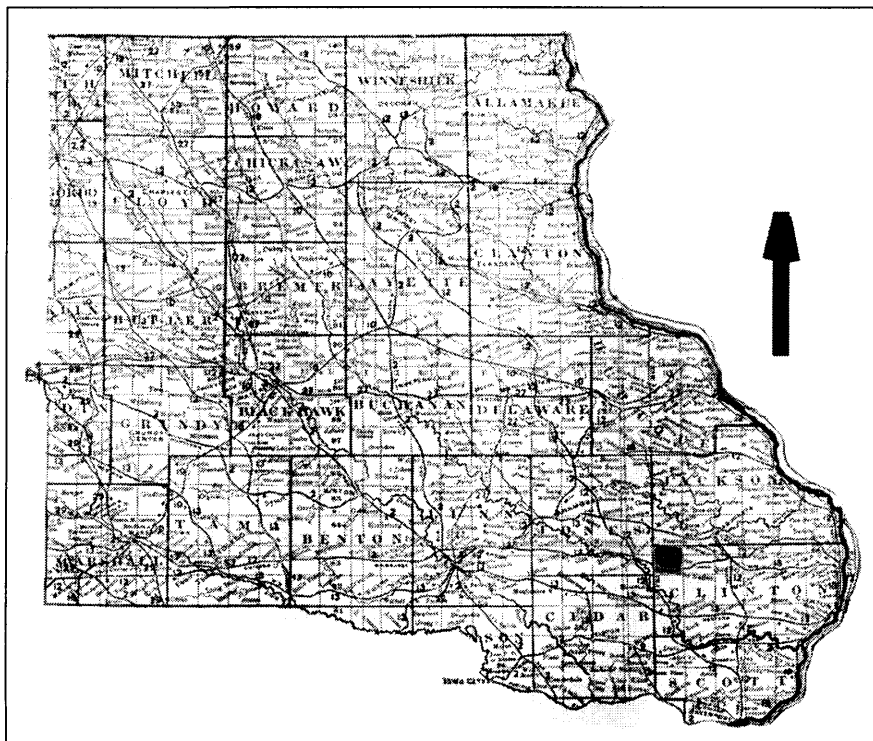


Figure 31: The Upper Iowa Conference of the M.E. Church, 1906 (Fellows). Sharon Township is marked with gray shading

The following Methodist ministers served the local congregation prior to the building of the church: Richard Myatt (circuit rider from Maquoketa); I. D. Barnard (1864-64), John W. Kynett (1865-66), A. McClintock (1866-1868), A. C. Elliott (1868-69), Harry H. Green (minister 1869-70), M. Whitmore (1870-71) and L. Winsett (1871-73).

⁴ A search for any "Kleis" builders in Cedar or Clinton counties turned up no candidate builders. A search of the 1870 Clinton County census found John Kreis, aged 43, Volentine Kreis, aged 54, and Nick Kreis, aged 24. The former two were Prussian born, all were listed as farmers in the township.

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Subsequent to the construction of the church, these ministers served: R. W. Milner (1873-75), W. S. R. Burnett (1875-76), Isaac Newton (minister 1876-77), George W. Rogers (1877-79), Charles M. Wheat (1879-1880), George B. Crinklaw (1880-82, see Figure 34), W. F. Dane (1882-84), E. W. Symmonds (1884-85), Merritt A. Goodell (1885-87), J. R. A. Harmer (1887-90), J. F. Spry (1890-91), Robert A. Miller (1891-92), John Bretnall (1892-94), Benjamin A. Wright (1894-97), W. F. Bacon (1897-1900), M. M. Leiser (1900-02), Thomas Carson (1902-04), James D. Perry (1904-06), B. A. Davis (1906-08), Thomas B. Potter (1908-10), Jesse M. Smith (1910-13), F. W. Cass (1913-14) and C. S. Gould (1914-15). One account states that Rev. Smith was the last minister to use the church and another states that the Methodists last used the church regularly in 1912 but continued to use it once-monthly for three more years. The Methodists consolidated with a church in Lost Nation in 1915 to form the Union Church (now the Presbyterian Church) but they retained ownership of the church ("Memories of Smithtown"; *Gazette; Herald; Lost Nation Press*, June 29, 1977; Fellows, pp. 162-63).

Methodism was first formally established in Iowa in Dubuque in 1833. The Iowa District was established in 1839 and divided into the Dubuque and Burlington districts a year later. The Iowa Conference of three districts was formed in 1844. Clinton County remained in the Dubuque District. In 1856 the Iowa Conference was divided into the Upper Iowa (see Figure 31) and Iowa conferences. The former extended originally into Nebraska. It contained 8,320 church members and these were served by 58 traveling preachers. Clinton County was a part of the Davenport District of the Upper Iowa Conference. In 1864 the Conference was reduced to the northeast one-fourth of the state. Cornell College was established as the first Conference seminary in 1856. It was soon joined by seminaries at Epworth and Fayette, Iowa. The Conference hired a single architect, W. W. Sanborn, of Lyons, Iowa, c.1864, to design new church buildings and parsonages. His designs were "strongly urged upon both pastors and people, architectural designs were furnished at small cost, and thus the first steps were taken toward beautifying and improving our church architecture." This service (by later architects) continued to be provided and Fellows noted in 1906 "This improvement has gone steadily forward as shown in the beautiful and imposing edifices erected in the last few years." It would appear that only the more substantial churches were subject to this design oversight. Over time, the Conference adopted general positions which opposed slavery, supported temperance, opposed any Sunday amusements ("Sunday excursion trains, ball games, picnics, newspapers, visiting, or social amusement of any kind...") and opposed the use of tobacco (Fellows, pp. 12, 21, 25, 29, 39-40, 51, 53, 54; 68, 87).⁵

Fellows identifies the years 1873-74 as years of declining Conference membership (a decrease of 1,013 in 1873 and 230 the next year). No similar periods of comparable losses had occurred since 1863, and none were experienced as late as 1906. Church membership growth had peaked in the late 1860s, with the rate of growth diminishing through 1872. The establishment of the Smithtown church coincided with this retraction and this might have necessitated the shared church arrangement (ibid., pp. 156-57).

⁵ Fellows provides a list of Conference churches with dates of their founding. This list does not include Burgess/Smithtown. The implication is that the Smithtown church was a mission church. No ministerial appointments for the church are listed (Fellows, pp. 153-55).

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Figure 32: 1915 photograph of cemetery and the church, view to the northeast

The Saint John's German Reformed Congregation History:

The complicating factor for historians is the necessity to distinguish between the two congregations which used the church. The church archives preserve a rare and extensive range of records for the Methodists, along with their songbooks and other religious books. The history of the German congregation is preserved in a range of oral accounts and personal letters. The Methodists resided around the new church site while the Germans lived to the northeast. The Germans were previously served by ministers from the St. Paul's German Reformed Church in Wheatland (located 13 miles south of Burgess) and this arrangement continued. The congregation was organized in 1867, holding their first service on September 1 of that year. They used the "Dickman School House" in the Washington School District, further north of Burgess/Smithtown, for their meetings and continued to use the school for Sunday School classes after the use of the church was secured (Smithtown Church And Cemetery History, Busch; East Iowa Churches--Smithtown).

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Figure 33: The St. John Reformed Choir, c.1878 ("Memories of Smithtown")
Rev. John Rettig sits at front right.

The German Reformed ministry in Iowa was just in its organizational infancy in the years just prior to the establishment of this church. The *Reformed Church Messenger* of October 21, 1874, carried a report from Iowa, that noted "Though their territory itself is nearly all missionary work [read the founding of area churches], yet they [the Iowa district or Classis] raised among themselves during the year from their few congregations for missionary purposes, \$1,174.84, besides other contributions for other benevolent purposes." The state churches were organized in English and German-speaking Classis, the latter being called the Ursinus Classis. The German churches had withdrawn from the Iowa Classis in the early 1870s after a bitter internal dispute. This fact likely explains why the area Reformed Church members lacked a church or the numbers to support their own church (*Reformed Church Messenger* of October 21, 1874, p. 8; St. Paul Centennial History).

Directors Herman Steiniger and Henry Burrichter signed the 1875 lease agreement. This congregation is referred to as the Reformed church in the historical records. At some point in time it built a horse barn on the church property. A 1959 article noted "it has been razed" implying a recent demolition (*Gazette*, March 21, 1959).

Reformed ministers, all of whom were assigned to the St. Paul's Reformed Church in Wheatland, in western Clinton County, were the following: J. C. Klar (1867), John Rettig (1867-79), George Rettig (1880+, John's brother), Christ Baum, C. G. Zipf, Frederick Dieckmann, John Link, Johann Gatermann (c.1911-14), Edmund Feurer (1915-16, resident minister for one year), William Bollman (1916) and F. Hullhorst. Other ministers who served were Albert Bock (for one year), Albert Goll (for one year), Friesenberg, Kahler, Barten, and Fischer (Busch; St. Paul's Centennial Book).

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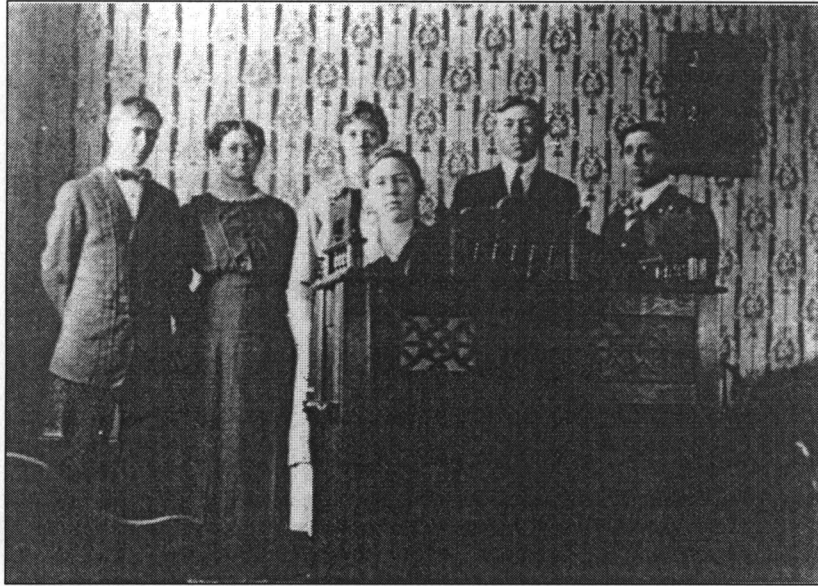


Figure 34: Church interior view, c.1915, note that organ remains in the church today
("Memories of Smithtown")

The Reformed Church services ended in 1915. Many members appear to have transferred to the Reformed church in nearby Wheatland. A new St. John's Reformed Church was organized in nearby Lost Nation in 1902. At that time it was reported that "St. John's in Smithtown has a membership of 60 communicants but no building as yet," a reference to this congregation (*Gazette*; Wolfe, pp. 183-84).



Figure 35: View outside northeast corner of church, east side, c.1915
(these are the same individuals shown in the previous image) ("Memories of Smithtown").

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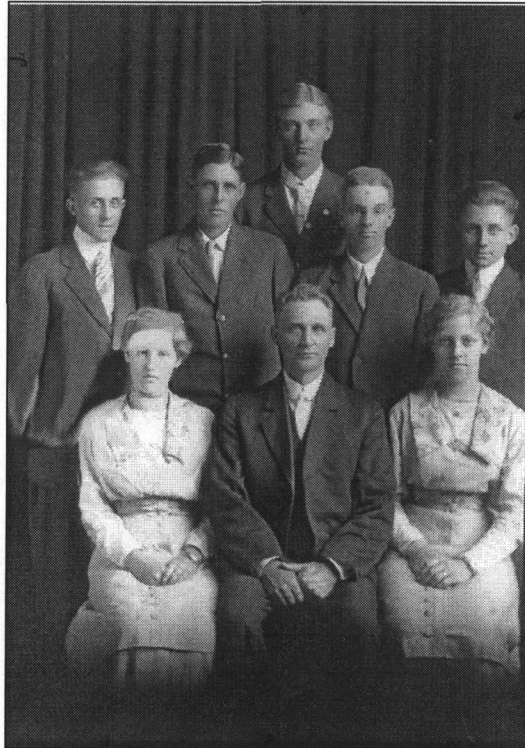


Figure 36: German Reformed Confirmation Class

Front, seated, left to right: Esther Groenwald Toensfeld, Rev. John Gaterman, Anna Burrichter Stender
Standing, middle row, left to right: Carl Schroeder, Emil Busch, Emil Mohr, Ervin Schroeder
Rear: Louis Nipp

Later Church History:

The building was not used as a church after World War I but it was commonly used for Farm Bureau and other community meetings.⁶ Funeral services were held there until 1940. In 1928 a cemetery association (the "Smithtown Cemetery Association") was organized and incorporated a year later. The church and cemetery were acquired in 1931 from the Methodist Conference. The church gained a new concrete foundation and a new roof at that time. It is possible that the steeple and weathervane were removed at this time but this is not a documented fact. In late 1969 the church (but not the cemetery) was given to the Clinton County Conservation Board and the commission completed a broad range of primarily interior repairs. It also cooperated with the Clinton County Historical Society to partly develop the building as a museum. The perceived significance of the building was its link with the town site of Burgess/Smithtown, the church being the last-standing building (*Gazette*; "Memories of Smithtown", *Herald*, August 4, 1970).

The effort to develop the church as a museum received serious attention between 1970 and 1973 and opened in October of 1973. Repair work included "a new roof and ceiling... a new [front] door and wallpaper on the walls."

⁶ The Clinton *Herald*, August 4, 1970, says the last regular religious service was held in 1926.

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The church retained “most of [the original] furnishings” so the effort to restore it to its 1874 appearance required no search for antique pews or other furniture. Several glassed display cases were added to present and protect church books, artifacts and archives (*Times-Democrat*, October 28, 1973).

A special union service was held at the church on August 2, 1970, celebrating the transfer of the building to the County Conservation Board. A centennial celebration was held on June 23, 1974. A historical brochure was developed and the church was opened for visitation on weekends. Special interdenominational services were offered on May 25, 1986, and on May 27, 2001 and bi-annual Memorial Day services have been held since 1977.

It is remarkable enough that preservation forces responded at the right time (just before the Great Depression made such efforts much less likely), but in 1977 a most unusual effort was made to completely restore the historical appearance of the church. Myron Sheldon was hired to design and build a replica steeple base and spire with a weathervane and lightning rod. In 1984, 18 members of the county Youth Corps repaired windows and refinished the sanctuary floor of the church (*DeWitt Observer*, August 18, 1984).

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10. Geographical Data:

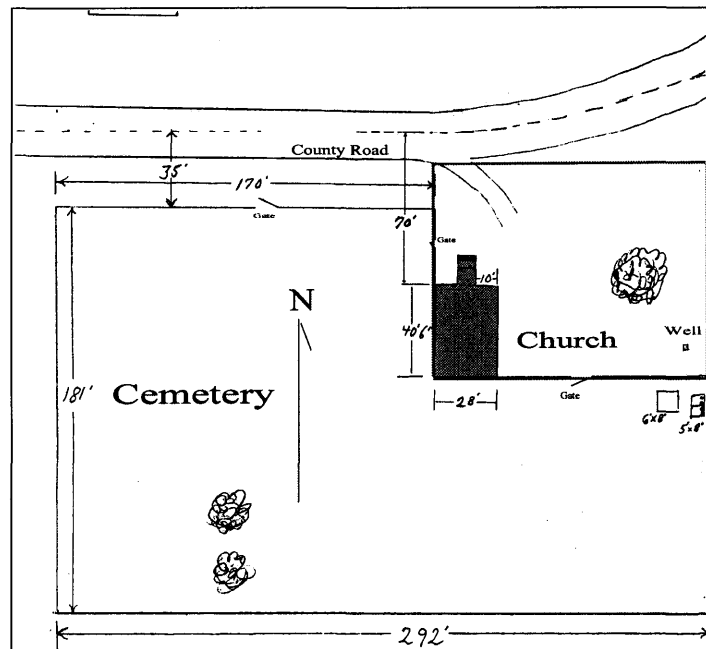
Boundary Description:

Commencing as a point of reference at the Northeast corner of the Northwest Quarter (NW1/4) of the Southwest Quarter (SW1/4) of Section Sixteen (16), Township Eighty-three (83) North, Range One (1) East of the 5th P.M. and thence South Twenty-two (22) rods to the center of the old Iowa City and Maquoketa Road being the point of beginning of the tract intended to be conveyed; thence westerly along the center line of said road a distance of One Hundred and Twenty (120) feet, more or less, to a point where the center line of said road intersects the projected West line of the church building; thence South along existing fence line and West line of church building a distance of One Hundred and Five (105) feet, more or less, to the Southwest corner of church building; thence East along the South line of church building and existing fence line a distance of One Hundred and Twenty (120) feet, more or less, to the East line of said Northwest Quarter (NW1/4) of the Southwest Quarter (SW1/4) of Section Sixteen (16); thence North to center line of road and point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

This parcel contains just the church and excludes the cemetery to the west and south. This is the historic land that was always associated with the church proper. The church is counted as one contributing property. There is a well head on the parcel but there is no above-surface structure, so it is not counted. The cemetery is excluded from this nomination.

Map:



Site map (black boundary denotes National Register boundary)
(drawn by Floyd Soenksen)

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Section number 10 **Page** 35 **Sharon Methodist Episcopal Church
Clinton County, Iowa**

Photographs:

Photographers: Floyd Soenksen
Date of Photographs: October 15, 21, 2002
Location of Original Negatives SHPO

<u>Photo</u>	<u>Direction</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Southwest	general view along the road, cemetery lies beyond the church
2	Southwest	general view from side of road, showing east and north walls of the church
3	Northeast	from cemetery, west and south walls of the church, view towards the road
4	Northwest	east and south walls of the church, view towards the road
5	Southeast	sanctuary interior, south wall, chandelier, window, wall sconce, stove hole, coved ceiling
6	South	attic view, vertical boards run down center of plan, boards at 45-degree angle support roof