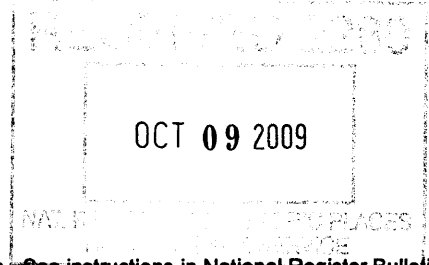


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

945



# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name St John's Catholic Church

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number Section 31 R96W 73N Dickens Township

not for publication

city or town Dallas

vicinity

state SD code SD county Gregory code 053 zip code 57529

### 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Jay D. Vogt  
Signature of certifying official  
SD SHPO

09-15-2009  
Date

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

11.20.09  
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
1		sites
	1	structures
		objects
		buildings
2	1	<b>Total</b>

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious Facility

Funerary: Cemetery

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious Facility

Funerary: Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Vernacular Gothic Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Wood

roof: Asphalt

other:

Name of Property

**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)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1915

**Significant Dates**

1915

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

**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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (Justification)**

St. John's is eligible under Criterion C for architecture; the period of significance is therefore 1915 the date of construction.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

St. John's is used irregularly for religious services, but it is primarily significant for its architectural merit as a vernacular example of the Gothic Revival style in rural South Dakota.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Dallas Historical Society. Dallas, South Dakota The End of the Line. Self-published, 1977.

Eades, Megan. Churches in South Dakota. South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, Pierre: SD, 2002.

Erpestad, David and David Wood. Building South Dakota. South Dakota State Historical Society Press, Pierre: SD, 1997.

Putnam, Bertha. History of St. John's Catholic Church From 1915 to 2009. Self-published, 1996.

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:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Table with 4 columns: Reference Number, Zone, Easting, Northing. Contains data for references 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

St. John's Catholic Church and Cemetery is the southwestern most acre of Section 31 R96W 73N Dickens Township, Gregory County, South Dakota.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary includes only property traditionally associated with the church as purchased in 1915.

St John's Catholic Church and Cemetery

Gregory County, South

Dakota

Name of Property

County and State

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Chris Nelson

organization South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office

date 29 July 2009

street & number 900 Governors Drive

telephone 605-773-3103

city or town Pierre

state SD

zip code 57501

e-mail Chrisb.nelson@state.sd.us

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional Items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property: St. John's Catholic Church and Cemetery**

**City or Vicinity: Dallas vicinity**

**County: Gregory**

**State: SD**

**Photographer: Chris Nelson**

**Date Photographed: 1 June 2009**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number: 3**

**StJohnsCathollicChurchandCemetery\_GregoryCounty\_SD\_0001.TIF Northeast**

**StJohnsCathollicChurchandCemetery\_GregoryCounty\_SD\_0002.TIF East**

**StJohnsCathollicChurchandCemetery\_GregoryCounty\_SD\_0003.TIF North**

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### **Summary Paragraph**

St. John's Catholic Church and cemetery are located in rural Gregory County approximately 8 miles southwest of the town of Dallas. St. John's is the only extant building from the town of Paxton. St. John's sits on approximately two acres of land on the northeast corner of intersecting section lines. The church and cemetery are surrounded by shelterbelts on the north and west side; a chain-link fence and line of trees also run along the south side of the property. A wood fence borders the eastern edge of the property. In between the church and the fence is a picnic shelter.

The church is rectilinear with a central tower on the façade and a polygonal apse on the north elevation. The tower has a pyramidal roof. The church has a concrete foundation, wood clapboard siding, and a gable roof with asphalt shingles. All of the windows are stained glass lancet windows.

The cemetery lies to the west of the church. The north and west borders of the cemetery consist of the shelterbelt. The south side is bordered by a chain link fence. The grave markers in the cemetery are mostly stone, but also include wood and metal.

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### **Narrative Description**

The façade (south elevation) has a central tower flanked by stained glass lancet windows. Cement steps lead to the entrance on the tower; the entrance has double metal doors. Above the doors is a stained glass lancet window. The top of the tower has four lancet window openings covered with boards; the pyramidal roof has asphalt shingles and is topped with a wood cross.

The east and west elevations are identical. Each has three stained glass lancet windows.

The north elevation has a polygonal apse with a hipped roof covered in asphalt shingles. There are two stained glass lancet windows on the apse and a door on the northeast corner. The apse extends slightly off the northeast corner; there is a wood door toward the southeast corner of the apse.

The cemetery lies directly west of the church; it is approximately 200' x 200'. A picnic shelter with wood poles and a metal roof lies to the east of the church.

Name of Property

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

St. John's is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. It is locally significant as a fine example of a vernacular Gothic Revival church in rural Gregory County. The historic cemetery associated with St. John's contributes to its significance. The picnic shelter on the church grounds does not contribute because of its lack of integrity.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

St. John's is eligible under Criterion C for its architectural merit as a vernacular Gothic Revival style church. Characteristics of the vernacular Gothic Revival style found on the church include the wood construction and the steeply pitched roof. The most prominent characteristic of this style are the stained glass lancet windows. Architects of Catholic churches often adopted Gothic and Romanesque styles in South Dakota.<sup>i</sup> St. John's is a fine example of this trend and retains excellent integrity to represent the vernacular Gothic Revival style in South Dakota.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)**History of Paxton**

The largest groups of American Indians present in South Dakota directly before white settlement were the Nakota, Dakota, and Lakota, known collectively as the Sioux. Anthropologists believe that the Sioux were pushed out of Minnesota onto the plains where they became the dominant group by the mid to late 1700s, although tribal creation stories tell of the Sioux inhabiting the area since time immemorial. The Dakota and Nakota lived primarily east of the Missouri River while the Lakota roamed the western half of the state. The Sioux were eventually forced onto reservations through a series of questionable treaties that opened up land for white settlement.

Up until 1890, Gregory County was part of the great Sioux Reservation. All lands east of the 99<sup>th</sup> meridian were removed from reservation at this time. Lands west of the 99<sup>th</sup> meridian were allotted to American Indian families under the Dawes Act of 1887. Area not allotted to Indian families was declared surplus and excluded from the reservation in 1901. In 1904, this part of Gregory County was opened up to settlement.<sup>ii</sup>

Paxton was a post office on the Gregory and Tripp County border. Paxton was settled due to the good agricultural land in the surrounding country. However, no waterway, railroad, or other transportation route ever reached Paxton, ensuring its short life and eventual demise. The only extant building from Paxton in its original location is St. John's.

**History of St. John's**

St. John's was built in 1915 on an acre purchased from J.T. Shanahan for \$50.00.<sup>iii</sup> St. John's was a mission church of the neighboring town of Burke the first year and became a mission Church of St. Augustine of Dallas in 1917.<sup>iv</sup> In 1919 a school house was built and opened on the church property which enrolled 30 students. In 1923, a parish house was built and Reverend J.J. McCool became the first resident pastor.<sup>v</sup>

Also in 1923, St. Anne's of the neighboring town of Carlock became a mission church of St. John's. Over the years, several clergymen served both churches. Father Robert Ehrenbold served St. John's for 30 years until failing health forced him to retire in 1973. In the same year as Father Robert's retirement, St. John's was closed.

In 1974, former St. John's parishioners petitioned the Most Reverend Bishop Dimmerling to let them keep the church as a memorial to the people who built it and the priest who served it. The Bishop agreed with the condition that the church be kept up in a proper and neat appearance. Former parishioners and their descendants still maintain the church and cemetery. The diocese has turned control of St. John's over to the former parishioners.

<sup>i</sup> David Erpestad and David Wood. *Building South Dakota*. (Pierre: SD, South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 1997), 68.

<sup>ii</sup> Dallas Historical Society. *Dallas, South Dakota The End of the Line*. (Self-published, 1977) 2.

<sup>iii</sup> Bertha Putnam. *History of St. John's Catholic Church From 1915 to 2009*. (Self-published 1996), 1.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid, 2.

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Name of Property**Churches and Church Architecture in SD**

Using the *Churches in South Dakota* context, St. John's can be classified as a transition between first and second generation churches. These churches were often larger than the earlier temporary churches and were influenced by Gothic Revival, Romanesque Revival, or Classical Revival styles of ecclesiastical architecture.<sup>vi</sup> These later churches also conveyed some particular denominational influences; architects of Catholic churches preferred Gothic and Romanesque Revival styles with basilica plans in South Dakota.<sup>vii</sup>

Built in 1915, St. John's falls in the transition phase between the temporary early structures and the later generation of higher styles built of brick and stone.<sup>viii</sup> This type of small, wood frame church became a popular form of religious architecture and has been dubbed "Prairie Gothic" as immortalized in Grant Wood's renowned painting.<sup>ix</sup> These churches typically have gable roofs, clapboard siding, have either a steeple or bell tower, and roughly measure 30 feet by 80 feet.<sup>x</sup> Gothic Revival style elements were usually limited to the use of transept arches in the interior plan and arched (lancet) windows.<sup>xi</sup>

While first generation churches in South Dakota were built out of sod, fieldstone, chalkrock and other available materials and then improved into frame buildings, second generation churches were constructed of substantive and more expensive materials. As budgets increased through church growth, the use of dressed stone and brick increased on the exterior of churches while the interiors saw the use of more ornamentation, particularly carved wood and cut stone. Stained glass was also used more often and in more complicated configurations.<sup>xii</sup>

These "Prairie Gothic" churches were often constructed with little regard to ethnicity or denomination, although there were some denominational peculiarities.<sup>xiii</sup> Many share the same common form, materials, and vernacular style in spite of the different denominations that constructed them. Stylistically, many of these churches are indistinguishable from one denomination to another.<sup>xiv</sup>

**Integrity**

St. John's has not been altered significantly since its construction in 1915. It retains excellent integrity in materials, workmanship, design, location, and setting. The church was closed in 1973, but former parishioners have cared for the church and cemetery with the permission of the diocese. The church is still used occasionally for wedding, funerals, and Memorial Mass the first Sunday after Memorial Day. Because the church has not had many physical changes on the exterior and has a relatively intact interior that is still used for occasional religious services, St. John's also retains a high degree of integrity in feeling and association.

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<sup>vi</sup> Erpestad and Wood, 19.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>viii</sup> Megan Eades. *Churches in South Dakota*. (Pierre: SD, South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 2002), 18.

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>x</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>xi</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>xii</sup> Ibid, 19-20.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid, 19.



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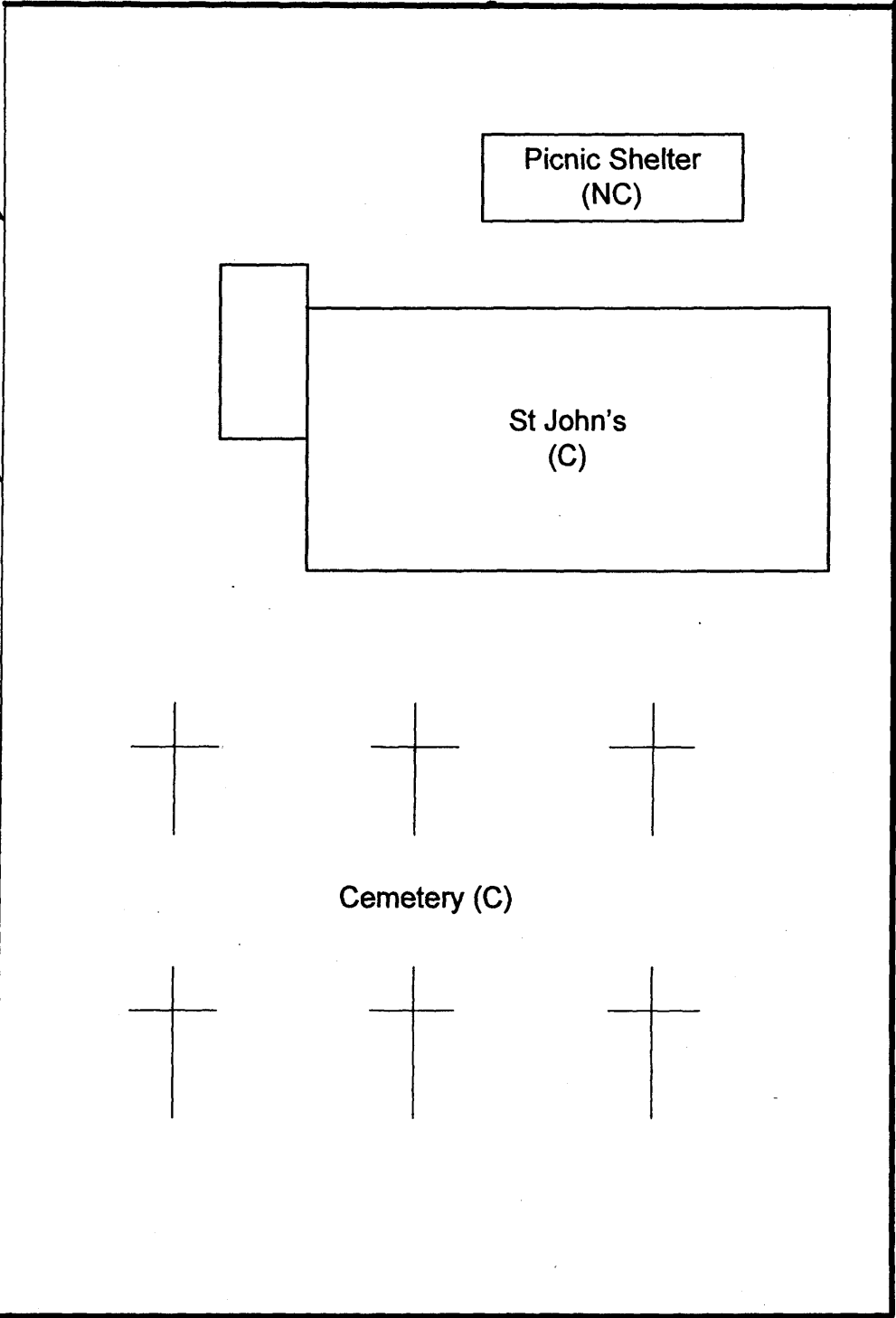
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St John's Catholic Church and Cemetery  
8 Miles SW of Dallas (Paxton)  
Gregory County, South Dakota

