



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 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 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: Wadsworth Union Church
other names/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number Southeast corner of Lincoln Highway and Railroad Avenue
not for publication N/A
city or town Wadsworth vicinity N/A
state Nevada code NV county Washoe code 031 zip code _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility, meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 3-3-04
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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register Edson F. Beall 4.15.04
___ 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): _____

[Signature] _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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

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

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: Religious Facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 LATE VICTORIAN/Gothic

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Rock

roof Composition Shingle

walls Wood

other _____

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

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.

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 a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance 1888-1904

Significant Dates 1888, 1904

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite 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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.143 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>11</u>	<u>304100</u>	<u>4389400</u>	3	___	___
2	___	___	___	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 Bernadette Francke
organization _____ date December 15, 2003
street & number 5555 Rivers Edge Drive telephone 775-867-2586
city or town Fallon state NV zip code 89406

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Wadsworth Union Church
street & number P.O. Box 11 telephone _____
city or town Wadsworth state NV zip code 89442

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Section 7, 8 Page 1

Wadsworth Union Church, Wadsworth, Washoe County, Nevada

7. Description

The Wadsworth Union Church was built in 1888. The small Gothic Revival-style church encompasses a mere 1,120 square feet. The main body of the building is front-gabled and clapboard-sided. The roof is covered in composition shingles. There are three Gothic-arched windows on the north and south elevations. The church entrance is a tiny vestibule attached to the front west-facing facade, with the belfry and steeple atop. The church bell still functions and issues a clear tone through the vents in the belfry walls. The double entry doors are topped by a Gothic window divided into thirds by tracery. The interior consists of two rows of pews separated by a central aisle. Wooden Gothic tracery and railings creates a chancel screen separating the congregation from the pulpit and the organ.

Integrity

The Wadsworth Union Church retains a remarkably high degree of all aspects of integrity. It has been repainted and a re-roofed number of times over the years, and the amber window glass was replaced in the 1970s, but it is unmistakably a nineteenth-century small-town church.

Criteria Consideration A

The Wadsworth Union Church building is not being proposed for listing on religious grounds. Rather, it is eligible under Criterion A for its historical association with the general patterns of social life in the railroad town of Wadsworth, Nevada during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As such, it should not be excluded from the National Register.

8. Statement of Significance

The Wadsworth Union Church in Wadsworth, Nevada is historically significant for its association with transportation and social history of a nineteenth-century railroad town. The Pacific Improvement Company, a land holding interest associated with the Central Pacific Railroad, donated the building site. Since its construction in 1888 by the citizenry, at least three religious dominations have used the building for services, a fraternal organization held meetings there, and fundraisers in the form of cultural programs took place in the building. The simple frame structure is well-preserved and carefully maintained. It is still used for weddings and cultural events.

Wadsworth, Nevada

Wadsworth, Nevada was a notable landmark in nineteenth-century transportation across the arid west. The small town has been in the middle of disputes over land, water rights, and boundary designations for over a century and a half. Now, three Nevada counties, the interstate freeway, a railroad short line and

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Wadsworth Union Church, Wadsworth, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

the Union Pacific Railroad tracks border the small community. The Truckee River originates from Lake Tahoe to the west flows eastward through Reno and Sparks maintaining an eastern course until it reaches Wadsworth, it then turns north terminating in Pyramid Lake. The Pyramid Lake Indian Tribe is purchasing property in and around Wadsworth to regain original reservation boundaries, and to acquire water rights.

At an elevation of 4,077 feet, Wadsworth sits in the center of the Great Basin. Native Americans occupied the region for more than 7,000 years. Known as the Desert culture, the earliest occupants of the Pyramid Lake area hunted and gathered their food. In the nineteenth century, Northern Paiutes fished Pyramid Lake for the Cui-ui and Lahontan Cut-throat trout. The fishery suffered lasting effects from upstream pollution from the Truckee Meadows, laws regulating the sale or transportation of the fish, over-fishing, and turn-of-the-century federal irrigation projects.

Euroamerican explorers mapped the region in the early nineteenth century. Captain John Charles Frémont explored the area in 1844 camping near a gathering of Paiutes. Frémont, a member of the Topographical Engineers, participated in previous excursions including the mapping of the Oregon Trail. His marriage to the daughter of the politically powerful Senator Thomas Hart Benton also aided his career. Frémont discovered the large lake on January of 1844 naming it Pyramid after a large rock formation that reminded him of the great pyramid of Cheops. The party followed the river Frémont named the Salmon Trout River to present day Wadsworth. Reportedly, a later emigrant group renamed the river the Truckee after Paiute Chief Truckee.

Traders, immigrants, and farmers capitalized on the rush to gold mining in California and later to the silver mining of the famed Nevada Comstock Lode. Some found prosperity in this area, as it was a stopping off point for water, a rare commodity in the arid Great Basin. William Gregory operated a trading post in the area in 1854. Before it was named Wadsworth, the site was known by a succession of names. Early accounts refer to it as the Big Bend of the Truckee River, later as Drytown, then Lower Emigrant Crossing.

The Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation encompassed the area of Wadsworth in a vague description of the boundaries in 1859. Designating "reserved" lands for the Indians was a routine practice in exchange for lands taken by white settlers and for sequestering Native Americans on reservations. Frederick Dodge, Indian Agent for what was then Utah Territory, proposed that the land around Pyramid Lake be removed from "sale and settlement" to provide a reservation for the Paiutes. The reservation was officially surveyed in 1865, and signed into order by President Grant in 1874. By 1865, Euroamerican settlers and Central Pacific Railroad surveys had encroached on the reservation. The Department of Interior

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Wadsworth Union Church, Wadsworth, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

suggested to the General Land Office that since the Central Pacific Railroad would traverse the Big Bend area to obtain water, they should decrease the reservation area ten miles on either side of the railroad's proposed route. This legally removed Wadsworth from Indian control. Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court and Indian Claims Commission ruled in favor of honoring the original 1859 designation.

The Central Pacific Railroad recognized an advantageous site for the railroad. Railroad officials platted a town at the Big Bend of the Truckee in 1868, the same year Reno was established. The new town was named in honor of James Samuel Wadsworth. Wadsworth was a union army officer killed in the Civil War Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864. Naming railroad stops after Union generals was a popular practice among the directors of the Central Pacific Railroad. The Truckee division of the railroad employed scores of workers, and Wadsworth became a bustling industrial town. A twenty-stall round house moved trains around the clock. Passenger trains lined up end-to-end along the station platform. Freight trains clogged main line tracks. Locomotives heading east obtained wood and water at Wadsworth, the last stop before crossing the desert and reaching the next water source on the Humboldt River. Large freight trains carried supplies and machinery to the numerous mining camps in Nevada and also transported produce to out-of-state markets.

Adjacent Lyon County quickly saw the advantage of annexing Wadsworth and a series of court trials resulted. After two trials in nearby Ormsby County, a third one was held in Humboldt County. The court ruled that Wadsworth was indeed in Washoe County, not in Lyon County. The boundary line in dispute ran along the "old emigrant road." In an effort to assess taxes against property in Wadsworth, Lyon County officials had argued that a cut-off from the road was the emigrant road.

While the Central Pacific Railroad was based in Wadsworth, the town saw a dramatic increase in population. Many settlers operated ranches in the surrounding area and businesses in town. The related commerce of hotels, grocery stores, general merchandise stores, variety stores, and saloons contributed to the town's population of about 2,000. Churches were important institutions as focal points of the social life of the community. For Wadsworth, the Union Church served as a religious and social center.

The Union Church

The *Wadsworth Dispatch* noted in March 1888 that "strenuous efforts are being made toward securing sufficient funds for the proposed new church. Such a building would prove quite an addition to our growing village, and a source of consolation to our railroaders." One source reported that Thomas Bellum, Episcopal Minister in Wadsworth, over-saw the construction of the Union Church, and that the local population contributed to the work and to the financing of the building. In June 1888, the newspaper reported that \$600 had been subscribed for a new Union church, and "as the town is composed

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Wadsworth Union Church, Wadsworth, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

almost entirely of railroad men, perhaps it may convince some of the good Christian exponents of the gospel specialty who are always preaching about their ungodliness, that the railroad boys are not as bad as they paint them." By August 10, 1888, the church had been completed. The *Reno Evening Gazette* noted: "Through the combined efforts of the ladies and gentlemen, they have erected near the railroad bridge on the banks of the river on a lot donated by the railroad, a neat little church, 28 x 40 feet, which is to be open to the advocates of all shades of belief."

The Pacific Improvement Company, was a holding company for railroad interests controlled initially by Leland Stanford, Mark Hopkins and Charles Crocker. At the time the property was deeded to the Union Church, Charles Crocker had died and Leland Stanford had deeded additional properties to the Pacific Improvement Company. The site for the Church was deeded to the trustees of the Wadsworth Union Church on September 5, 1889 and recorded by the request of Wells Fargo and Co. in 1891. The original trustees for the Union Church Association were T.G. Herman, T. S. Bastian, and H.M. Johnson. W.E. Brown, president of the Pacific Improvement Company included in the transfer the caveat that if and when "said property ceases to be used for church purposes it shall revert to the party of the first part."

In later editions, the *Wadsworth Dispatch* was full of detailed accounts of weddings, funerals, and baptisms at the Union Church. Rev. T.L. Bellam officiated at the funeral of Emmet E. Zeigler in 1894. Later that evening, members of the Truckee Lodge No. 19, Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, attended church en masse. The newspaper reported that "the little edifice was crowded by the friends of the deceased. It seems such a short time ago that he stood in the Union Church, a happy, handsome young man making his marriage vows." Daniel Proctor's funeral also took place from the Union Church in 1894. Proctor had been a Wadsworth resident for twenty-two years. Of Proctor, the newspaper wrote: "The foundation stones of the Union Church were his gift and they like his character, plain but substantial and serving their every purpose, a tower of strength for the good." In 1904, Chester Epperson's funeral took place "... from the Union Church, under the auspices of Pyramid Lodge No. 19, Knights of Pythias. A more beautiful profusion of flowers was never seen in Union Church."

The *Wadsworth Dispatch* also noted upkeep on the church. On May 16, 1894, a contract was let to R.L. Fuller & Co. for painting the church and to John Holland for putting up a fence. Reporters noted "Both of the above contractors have made a liberal reduction on their work as it is for 'our little church.'" The work was completed by May 26, 1894 when a newspaper reporter stated: "The Union Church looks very much improved with a new fence and a new coat of paint."

With the purchase of the Central Pacific Railroad by the Southern Pacific Railroad at the beginning of the twentieth century, changes occurred in the railroad town. By 1904, the railroad division center was moved to Sparks, a few miles east of Reno. Many railroad buildings including the Wadsworth Depot

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Wadsworth Union Church, Wadsworth, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

were dismantled and relocated in Sparks. Even the newspaper eventually ceased operations. Homes were also dismantled, landscaping was prepared for transplant, livestock, along with dogs and cats, were transported by rail to Sparks. The Sparks locale made it easier for maintenance on the eastbound trains coming down the steep slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Even with the majority of the population relocated to Sparks, the Wadsworth Union Church continued to serve the remaining population in Wadsworth, and Rev. Bellam continued to conduct services in the building. When the Catholic Church in Wadsworth burned in 1904, services were held in the Wadsworth Union Church. In later years, the Methodist congregation rented the building from the Wadsworth Union Church for services at a fee of \$5.00 per month.

Around the turn of the century, the issue of non-Indian residents on reservation lands within the town of Wadsworth and non-Indian farming on reservation lands around Wadsworth was debated by politicians and the tribal council. Earlier, U.S. Senator William Stewart attempted to champion the cause of the farmers on reservation lands but failed. Court cases and legislation including those presented by Senators Key Pittman and Pat McCarran were unable to modify the stance of officials in Washington. Alida C. Bowler, Nevada Indian Agency Superintendent, was an outspoken on behalf of the tribe's land problems. She incurred the wrath of Pat McCarran, and was transferred in 1939.

Property rights continue to dominate change in Wadsworth. In 1990, the Truckee River Negotiated Settlement Act authorized the U.S. Department of Interior to purchase land from willing sellers in the Wadsworth. Non-Indian ranching families have willingly sold the disputed portion of their lands to the Pyramid Lake Tribe. Some water rights from the Newlands Irrigation Project have also been purchased by the tribe, and the historic public school building in Wadsworth was recently acquired by the tribe.

Between the 1910 and 1950s, little was written about the Union Church. Brother David, an episcopal minister who had an earlier career as a Shakespearean actor and later as a Hollywood movie actor, held services in the church. His unusual career included pastoral duties on the Pyramid Lake Indian Reservation at Nixon. He visited with Hollywood movie stars when they travelled to Reno, frequently for a divorce. He apparently worked at a wedding chapel in Reno in 1957 when he officiated at the marriage of noted novelist Erskine Caldwell to his fourth wife. His papers are on file at the University of Nevada Special collections under the name of Garreth Hughes.

St. Margaret's Altar Society from nearby Fernley cleaned the church regularly in the 1950s. The Catholic Church held services in the Union Church in the 1960s. Local residents recall neighbors' baptisms and weddings. The Wadsworth and Fernley Free Methodist Church also rented the building for \$5.00 a month in the 1960s and 70s. In the 1970s, local residents generated monies for the preservation of the

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Wadsworth Union Church, Wadsworth, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

building. Mailings were sent out to previous residents of Wadsworth, particularly those that had attended the local public school. Under the direction of Ebe Philgren, the results of these mailings were meticulously recorded by Alma DePaoli and Enzo Gori. Musical cantatas presented in the church by the Fernley and Wadsworth Community Choir produced donations for the preservation of the building. The Wadsworth Bicentennial Commission received a grant from the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission. As a result of community efforts and donations and grants, a new foundation was placed under the building, the roof was replaced, new carpeting was installed, and the front gates and the amber glass windows were replaced. A Youth Conservation Corps, headquartered at the nearby S Bar S Ranch, scraped and repainted the exterior of the building.

In recent years the building has been maintained by Clay Gardner one of the last remaining members of a small group that gathered to preserve the building. He lives next door and also coordinates the building's use for social activities. The multi-denominational use of the Wadsworth Union Church represents a unique community spirit and an active railroad town. There are no other nineteenth-century buildings in Wadsworth in a well-maintained condition that represent the railroad's influence in the community. Residents took part in constructing a building that unified them in spirit as well as employment. For the significant role the church played in the history of Wadsworth, it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A.

9. Bibliography

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Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1974

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Wadsworth Union Church, Wadsworth, Washoe County, Nevada

9. Bibliography, continued

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Nicoletta, Julie. *Buildings of Nevada*.
Oxford: University Press, 2000

Rusco, Elmer R. *A Reporter At Large Dateline: Pyramid Lake, Nevada*.
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Washoe County Appraisal Record.
Washoe County Assessors Office.

Oral Interviews with Clay Gardner, caretaker Union Church

10. Geographical Description

Boundary Description

The National Register boundaries of the Wadsworth Union Church includes the 0.143-acre parcel identified as Assessor's Parcel Number 084-200-44, Washoe County, Nevada.

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Wadsworth Union Church, Wadsworth, Washoe County, Nevada

10 Geographic Data, continued

Boundary Justification

Resource boundaries include all land commonly associated with the lot identified as Washoe County, Nevada APN 084-200-44.

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Section Photographs Page 9

Wadsworth Union Church, Wadsworth, Washoe County, Nevada

Photographs

Property Name: Wadsworth Union Church
Property Location: Southeast corner of Lincoln Highway and Railroad Avenue, Wadsworth
Photographer: Bernadette Francke
Date: November 2003
Location of Negative: State Historic Preservation Office
100 N. Stewart Street
Carson City, Nevada

Photograph 1: Front Elevation, facing east