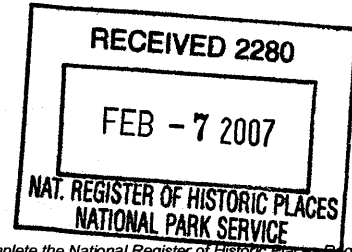


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke
Other names/site number St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church, HW09-001

2. Location

Street & number 1796 7th Avenue Not for publication
City or town Nysted Vicinity
State Nebraska Code NE County Howard Code 093 Zip code 68831

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Michael J. Ash
Signature of certifying official

February 2, 2007
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
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

I, hereby, certify that this 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): _____

Elson H. Beall 3/21/07

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- X Private
Public-local
Public-state
Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- X Building(s)
District
Site
Structure
Object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: Buildings (1, 0), Sites, Structures, Objects, Total (1, 0).

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Brick

Roof Composite shingles

Other

Narrative Description

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

- X 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.
X 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:

- X 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage/European

Architecture

Period of Significance

1919-1938

Significant Dates

1919 - construction started

1938 - congregation's official language no longer Danish

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Builders: John Ohlsen and William H. Ohlsen

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 for additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local Government
University
Other
Name of repository:

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	532464	4553578	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 Marjorie Christensen/Barbara Sorensen; Jill Dolberg – Historic Buildings Survey Coordinator, NE SHPO

organization St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church

date December 4, 2006

street & number 2201 E Cuming/721 Page Road

telephone _____

city or town Fremont/Dannebrog

state Nebraska

zip code 68025/68831

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/title St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, Rev. Don Voorhees, Pastor

street & number 1796 7th Avenue

telephone (308) 226-2343

city or town Dannebrog

state Nebraska

zip code 68831

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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, (15 USC 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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church is located in Nysted, Nebraska in Howard County. Nysted is approximately 145 miles west of Lincoln, the state capital, and is located in the east central part of the state. Nysted is an unincorporated town with a very small population and few dwellings surrounded by farmland. Nysted's peak population was recorded in 1890 with a populace numbering 65.¹ Nysted was named by its Danish citizens for a town in Denmark whose name meant "New Place."

This church is a rectangular shaped, one story brick structure with a composite shingled gable roof. It has a concrete foundation. The façade contains a central entrance under a square bell tower. A stout gothic window is found above the front doors, along with a "blind roundel." The front façade contains engaged buttresses with concrete caps on either side of the door, which provide structural support to the tower. The bell tower also contains gothic shaped vents with concrete caps. The inscription on the bell when translated reads "Yours was not the busy city's pounding, you were cast for my own village small." The front doors are original.

Each side of the church contains four gothic arched windows with concrete caps, and all are found between engaged buttresses that also feature concrete caps. The gable ends of the main portion of the building, as well as bell tower's four sides, are stepped gables of brick, a stylistic feature typical to Danish village churches. At the rear of the building, the chancel is stepped in from the nave of the church, and features its own stepped gable. A chimney is also found at this junction.

Stepping inside the wooden front doors, one finds a small alcove with a wide stair leading to the sanctuary. A chair lift has been installed to one side to facilitate the entrance of people who have trouble navigating the stairs. An office and a storage room are located on either side of the doorway to the sanctuary. The sanctuary is large with approximately twenty original wooden pews. The sanctuary has a hand carved pulpit with Jess Schmidt's detailed carvings of the writer of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He also carved the altar and painted a depiction of Jesus with Mary and Martha. The words underneath the depiction are "Et er fornødent" which translates to "It is needed." The altar is stepped in a way that mimics the architecture of the church itself. A beautiful wooden arch with panels frames the chancel. A circular communion kneeling rail with rich padding surrounds the altar. The fellowship hall, kitchen and bathrooms are located in the basement.

The church is located along the country road into Nysted. The area surrounding the church is left clear for parking, but it is separated from the road by a line of trees. The church is located across the road from the original Nysted Folk School, which has since been sold to the Western Conference of the Evangelical Wesleyan Church for a summer camp.

The church itself has excellent historic integrity. The only changes to the building include the installation of a chair lift for the disabled, and an enclosed doorway that protects steps to the basement of the church from the weather. It is diminutive compared to the scale of the rest of the building, and does not overly detract from the architecture of the church.

¹ Elton A. Perkey, *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names* (Lincoln, Nebraska: J&L Lee and Company, 1995), 105.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the church is eligible for its role in maintaining and promulgating the heritage of the region's Danish immigrants and their children. The church used Danish as its primary language until 1938, a relatively late date. Through its role in the Danish Folk School, it promoted education and the quest for enlightenment amongst Danish-Americans from the area, but also for those of Danish descent for several states around Nebraska. It sought to encourage them to foster education throughout a lifetime, be both good Americans and good Danes. The church is also eligible under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The building, with its stepped gables, is reminiscent of the Danish village churches the immigrants would have attended before they emigrated, and is what they would have looked back upon for inspiration for a building to suit their spiritual needs. The building has excellent historic integrity and remains an important place to the descendants of the builders to this day.

Danish Immigrants in Nebraska

Among Danish pioneers in Wisconsin in the late 1860s, it became obvious that capital was increasingly required to create a successful farmstead, but abundant land was still available from the federal government in Nebraska for free. In 1870, the Danish Land and Homestead Company was incorporated to seek out new lands in Nebraska for groups of Danish immigrants. It was generally thought that in Nebraska "... the soil-loving Danes could enjoy the further advantage of dwelling in a large compact Danish community, where they might live their own lives, maintaining such customs and co-operative ideals from the fatherland as they should find to be applicable to the conditions of their adopted country."²

Beginning in the 1870s, Danes who wished to continue to adhere to their Danish Lutheran heritage began to form churches.³ A congregation in nearby Dannebrog, St. Hans, split into two factions over several issues, not the least of which was the proper amount of emphasis to place on the Bible versus the Apostles' Creed and the sacraments.⁴ A group formerly associated with St. Hans moved from Dannebrog to the area around Nysted.⁵ In 1883, Laerke Sorensen set aside land for the Danish settlers for a town at Nysted. On August 5, 1883, a constitution was formed and accepted establishing St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke. In the beginning they were associated with the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, and later the American Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The village of Nysted began to modestly thrive. Soon, the community included a mutual insurance society, a grain storage co-operative, a blacksmith shop, a creamery, a bank and a drug store.⁶ The first church building was constructed in 1887. The congregation cooperatively pledged its support to the new church. The Ladies Aid Society raised money for the church's expenses, while farmers set aside the produce from "church farming" to go toward the upkeep of the church.⁷ In 1918, the original church was torn down, and the location was cleared for a new, substantially built brick church.

Danish Folk School

It is difficult to relate the history of St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Church without including information about the Danish Folk School located across the road to the south. The spiritual father of the folk school movement was Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872). This Danish poet, preacher, historian and patriot believed that "every Dane should be an enlightened, useful citizen." In contrast to the pietistic attitude that life on earth is merely a preparation for eternity, Grundtvig believed that man's entire early life was a God-given gift with a value in itself. He was convinced that each nation on earth had a valuable role to play in the unfolding of world history. Grundtvig had a high degree of respect for the other cultural traditions of the world, and he did not view Denmark as superior. Grundtvig believed that all humans are born into a particular cultural and historical context, through which their own personal drama of enlightenment must be

² *St. Paul Phonograph*, 18 June 1924.

³ Save America's Heritage, *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Final Report and Preliminary Inventory of Washington County, Nebraska*, 122.

⁴ *Ibid*, 123.

⁵ Jean M. Matteson and Edith M. Matteson, *Blossoms of the Prairie*, 161.

⁶ *Ibid*.

⁷ *Ibid*.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

played out. He believed that there is a collective as well as an individual aspect to the experience of enlightenment, and that it must be a goal of society to create the conditions that will lead to enlightenment.⁸

To that end, six folk schools were built in North America, five in the United States and one in Canada. The ambitious community in Nysted, centered on its church, first learned of plans for a folk school that same year, and students began arriving by December. The Nysted Folk School opened December 1, 1887 in an old store building with six students registered. Work began on a new larger building the following summer, which was completed in October. There were no academic or entrance requirements, no examinations or grades, and it served many Danish immigrants who wanted to learn more about the country they had chosen to make their home. At the same time, the folk school sought to preserve their Danish heritage by encouraging the use of the Danish language. Some of the other subjects it offered were English, Capitalism, Modern Trends in Psychology, World Literature, U. S. History, Science and Religion, Art, Athletics, the Future of Farming, and the Role of the American Negro in American Civilization.

Many faculty members were also the pastors of St. Peder's. For example, Reverend C. P. Højbjerg served as pastor of St. Peder's and Headmaster of the Folk School from 1907 to 1912. Mrs. Højbjerg worked faithfully in the kitchen of the Folk School preparing meals for the students. Due to her poor health, they left in 1912 and later returned to serve from 1931 to 1935 to carry on the work of the school and church.

The Folk School served until 1937 when the Great Depression and drought made it impossible to continue. Educational opportunities were carried on through camps, recreational laboratories and retreats. Nysted was, at the time, the cultural center of the district, and there were many meetings held. A sort of Mardi Gras late in February was called "Fastelavnsgilde." They also celebrated Denmark's National Law Day on the fifth of June every year. In 1967, the Folk School property was sold to the Western Conference of the Evangelical Wesleyan Church, in whose possession it remains today and is used for summer camps.

Danish Community

The Danish community in Howard County, and Nysted in particular, wanted to maintain aspects of their culture, while still making the most of the American homesteading opportunity. To that end, the pioneers embraced the Danish idea of the cooperative, believing that as a group they could achieve more by working together.

All were like brothers and sisters – members of a common family – there was neither class nor property distinction: all were subject to the same tribulations, but all inspired by the same great common hope. The help rendered was always mutual. Even the simple social pleasures were fraternally shared without discrimination; for whenever a settler in the course of developments prospered enough to afford a board floor in his sod house, the entire colony was invited to an old-time Danish ball.⁹

The cooperative movement, and the agricultural marketing cooperative movement in particular originated in Denmark. Beef, grain and cream and egg marketing cooperatives, which existed in the Midwest between 1900 and 1940, were focused in states having significant populations of citizens of Danish descent.¹⁰

Coming from a country which today is practically one great cooperative enterprise, in which the middleman figures as a forlorn cipher, the Danes had a peculiar genius for mutual organization and co-labor. The first venture of this kind occurred as early as 1874, when twenty farmers each paid in five dollars and bought a sorghum mill and evaporating pan for making sorghum molasses, which was one of the dependable food items of the early settlers.¹¹

⁸ National-Louis University website. <http://65.79.10.30/academics/cas/ace/resources/nfsgrundtvig.cfm>. Viewed December 4, 2006.

⁹ *St. Paul Phonograph*, 18 June 1924.

¹⁰ Save America's Heritage, *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Final Report and Preliminary Inventory of Washington County, Nebraska*, 123.

¹¹ *St. Paul Phonograph*, 18 June 1924.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

Community members of Nysted also established a mutual insurance society, and a grain storage cooperative.

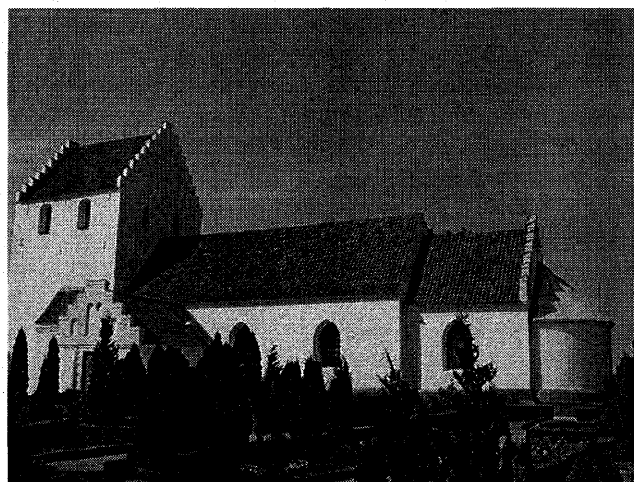
The Danish community at Nysted continued much as it always had as a center of Danish cultural heritage until World War I, when the same pressures that caused German immigrants to begin to speak exclusively in English began to work upon this community. Factions in Nysted felt that the community should become "more American." Others felt that Americanism should not be forced upon anyone so suddenly. Factions moved to Sheridan County or as far away as Danevang, Texas as a result of the conflict.¹² Still, church records indicate that Danish services were held in St. Peder's until after 1931. English became the language of the congregation only after 1938. Even so, the story of the birth of Jesus Christ was told in Danish from the pulpit every Christmas as a special event.

Architecture

According to *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America*, most Danish Lutheran Churches for which Danish-American communities are known are designed in a variant of the High Victorian Gothic style. St. Peder's Church is one of few in the United States which displays the square entrance tower and stepped gables of the Dutch style prominent in the 15th and 16th century Danish ecclesiastical architecture.¹³ The design is indicative of the traditional village churches of their homeland, with numerous stepped gables and prominent towers. Incised decorations such as the blind roundel, while not elaborate on this example, are reminiscent of the blind colonnades of the original examples in Denmark. The stylistic details of St. Peder's are particularly similar to the churches in Asperup and Landet in Denmark, found below.



Asperup Church



Landet Church

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the church represents the Danish heritage of Howard County and Nysted in particular. Danish immigrants established colonies in this central region of Nebraska, and through attendance at St. Peder's Dansk Kirke and the popularity of the Danish Folk School at Nysted, an outgrowth of the mission of the church,

¹²Jean M. Matteson and Edith M. Matteson, *Blossoms of the Prairie*, 162.

¹³Dell Upton, *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America*, 123.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

perpetuated the community's Danish heritage for several generations. The church is also eligible for listing under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The church features elements of the smaller village churches of the fatherland, from which the Danish-American farmers drew inspiration and spiritual guidance in establishing their own churches. The shared features include the stepped gables so prominent on the sides of the bell tower and encompassing the nave and the chancel. Criterion Consideration A is justified through its architectural distinction and significance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 9 Page 1

Ebbesen, Peter. "Historical Sketch of the Danish Colonies and Pioneers of Howard County." *St. Paul Phonograph*, 18 June 1924 to 2 July 1924.

Matteson, Jean M. and Edith M. Matteson. *Blossoms of the Prairie: The History of the Danish Lutheran Churches in Nebraska*. Blossoms of the Prairie: Lincoln, Nebraska, 1988.

National-Louis University website. <http://65.79.10.30/academics/cas/ace/resources/nfsgrundtvig.cfm>. Viewed December 4, 2006.

Perkey, Elton A. *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names*. J&L Lee Company: Lincoln, Nebraska, 1995.

Save America's Heritage. *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Final Report and Preliminary Inventory of Washington County, Nebraska*. S.A.H., Lincoln, Nebraska: 1986.

"St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Nysted Community." Undated pamphlet.

"St. Peder's Lutheran Church, 1883." Undated pamphlet.

Upton, Dell, ed. *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America*. The Preservation Press: Washington D.C., 1986.

"Welcome to St. Peder's Evangelical Lutheran Church." Undated pamphlet.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description:

Tract in the SW ¼ SW ¼ Section 32, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, Lots 1 & 2, Block A, Nysted.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary for St. Peder's Dansk Evangelical Lutheran Kirke encompasses all the land historically associated with the church.