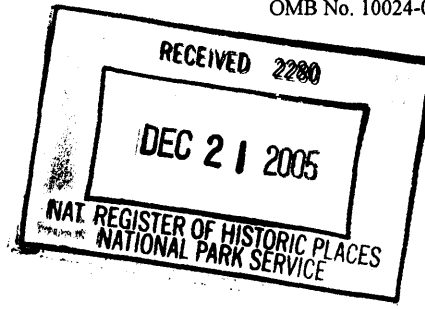


1579



United States Department of 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 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

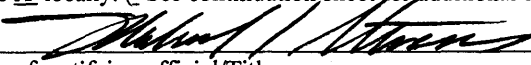
historic name Zion Congregational Church
other names/site number Old Stone Church

2. Location

street & number N4042 Amity Road N/A not for publication
city or town Town of Alto N/A vicinity
state Wisconsin code WI county Fond du Lac code 039 zip code 53919

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.)


Signature of certifying official/Title
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

Dec 6, 2005
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 official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Zion Congregational Church

County Fond du Lac

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I 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.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall

2/1/06

for

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as
as apply)

- Private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

contributing	noncontributing
1	1 buildings
1	1 sites
	1 structures
	1 objects
2	2 total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources
is 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)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Stone

walls Stone

roof Asphalt

other Wood

Narrative Description

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

Zion Congregational Church
Name of Property

County Fond du Lac
County and State

Wisconsin

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the 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 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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1858

Significant Dates

1858

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

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.)

Zion Congregational Church
Name of Property

Fond du Lac County
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- 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:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.2 acres

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

1 16 355278 4838903
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

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	Carol Lohry Cartwright, Consultant	date	August 9, 2005
organization	For Zion Congregational Church	telephone	262-473-6820
street & number	W7646 Hackett Rd.	zip code	53190
city or town	Whitewater	state	WI

Zion Congregational Church
Name of Property

County Fond du Lac
County and State

Wisconsin

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Debra Rogers, President	date	August 9, 2005
organization	Zion Congregational Church Board	telephone	920-921-7579
street&number	365 W. Ninth St.	zip code	54935
city or town	Fond du Lac	state	WI

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
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Zion Congregational Church

Section 7 Page 1 Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

Start description on line below

DESCRIPTION

The Zion Congregational Church, known locally as the Old Stone Church, sits on a very long four-acre parcel the rural Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. The building is located a few miles north of the tiny village of Alto, which is a few miles northwest of Waupun, a small city in southeastern Wisconsin. This area of Wisconsin is largely rural with agricultural land interspersed with small cities and villages.

The Town of Alto is entirely rural with large farm fields, farmsteads, and small woodlots dominating the landscape. Like many areas of Wisconsin, only a few of the farmsteads are attached to working farms. The Town of Alto, along with most of Fond du Lac and nearby counties, has long been a successful dairying region. Today, in the Town of Alto, most of the dairying is concentrated on a few farms that contribute milk to the large, modern cheese factory in the village of Alto. The rural, agricultural, setting is picturesque and the old stone church is a natural complement to the landscape.

The long church parcel is divided almost in half. The old stone church sits at the front of the front half of the parcel relatively close to Amity Road. A privy sits a short distance just southwest of the church building. About 450 feet back from the church is the cemetery. The cemetery extends back about 190 feet to a fence line. The rest of the narrow property is undeveloped. Because the front half of the parcel (2.2 acres) includes the significant historic resources, the undeveloped rear section of the property has been excluded from nomination (see Section 10).

Amity Road is the eastern boundary of the site that was defined for this nomination. The north and south boundaries run along a fence line and a fence line in back of the cemetery defines the western boundary. This land is relatively flat, but there is a slight slope from the road to the large lawn in back of the church, then the land rises a bit toward the cemetery. This slight slope caused the church builders to make the west ends of the side walls and the rear or west wall of the church slightly longer than the front of the building.

The site is not formally landscaped. Most of the site is taken up by a lawn that encompasses the church and extends back to the cemetery. A gravel driveway runs along the north boundary to the cemetery, where it forms a loop for a turn-around. There are no roads in the cemetery. There are some mature trees and shrubs along the fence lines and a large oak sits in front of the church. The only other landscape elements are some large trees in the cemetery. A tall wrought-iron overhang extends from the north elevation of the church to the north fence line, covering the gravel driveway. It has an iron sign in the center that reads, "Oak Mound Cemetery."

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Zion Congregational Church
Section 7 Page 2 Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

Church Exterior

The Zion Congregational Church is also known as the Old Stone Church because of its limestone construction. The one-story rectangular building has fairly regularly coursed rusticated limestone walls of irregular quarried blocks and limestone rubble. The walls are joined at the corners with coursed rusticated narrow limestone blocks. An unusual detail of the two side walls are a regular series of lighter colored stones that appear about one-third of the way down the side windows, then again level with the base of the windows. It is unclear if these blocks are functional or whether they are merely decorative. Another unusual feature is in the construction of the rear or west wall of the church. Here, just right of center is a dark stone that is almost heart-shaped. Its location and shape suggests that it may be symbolic of the human heart; or it may be a mark of the builder, or just coincidental.

The low-pitched gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and a small brick chimney projects from the back of the church. The gable peaks are clad with narrow clapboards. Under the roof eaves is a wooden frieze that runs almost around the entire building. The roof eaves form a full pediment on the main or east elevation. On the rear or west elevation there are cornice returns.

Punctuating both the north and south elevations is symmetrical fenestration of two tall windows filled with eight-over-eight light double-hung sashes. Long three-panel louvered shutters enclose the openings for most of the year and have been maintained and repaired throughout the church history. They are open for the annual religious service in the building and any other activities. The openings are decorated with flat stone lintels and narrow wooden sills. There are no openings in the rear or west elevation.

The main elevation is decorated with a classically decorated entrance. The double wood entry doors covering the large opening have two long narrow vertical recessed upper panels each and a single horizontal lower recessed panel below. These doors are slightly recessed behind a frontispiece that has an entablature supported by pilasters. The entablature features a projecting cornice over a frieze accented with plain horizontal moldings. The pilasters have undecorated capitals and sit on thick bases. The interior floor extends slightly beyond the entry doors and acts as a step up to the entrance. A small concrete pad sits on the ground in front of the entrance.

Church Interior

The church interior is simple and largely original. It has not been updated with heating, electricity, or plumbing. The only decoration consists of simple moldings under windows that are recessed into the

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Zion Congregational Church

Section 7 Page 3 Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

thick walls and plain baseboards that accent the wide wood floor. The walls and ceiling are covered with original heavy plaster. Simple iron lamp holders project from the ceiling and can be used for kerosene lamps. The furnishings are simple and include historic pews, an old stove, and a simple altar/lectern. The altar/lectern has simple classical details including a cornice, panels, and pilasters.

The building is in fair to good condition. The most noticeable problem is the stained plaster, but for a building almost 150 years old and only used sporadically during the last 100 years, it is remarkably well-preserved. The current church board is a small group dedicated to the building's preservation.

Privy and Gazebo

The privy or outhouse is a small building that sits to the southwest of the church. Its date of construction is unknown and it does not contribute to the architectural significance of the church. Due to its more recent construction date, the gazebo is a non-contributing structure.

Oak Mound Cemetery

The contributing cemetery site consists of 96 square plots of which over three-quarters are filled with from one to five graves. The vacant plots sit at the front of the cemetery, closest to the church. There are five paths that run north-south through sections of the cemetery and two plots toward the front have mature trees. The cemetery was founded at the same time as the church and contains the graves of most of the congregation's earliest members, including its first board of trustees: Jan Wolhuisen, Dirk Lammers, William Hoftieser, Jan De Groot, and Dirk Jan Nagel. Some gravestones are not marked or are unreadable, but there are several that date to the 1860s, a few years after the church was founded.

___ End of Description of Physical Appearance

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Zion Congregational Church
Section 8 Page 1 Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

____ Insert Statement of Significance

SIGNIFICANCE¹

The Zion Congregational Church is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C. The building, also known as the Old Stone Church, is architecturally significant at the local level as a fine example of the Greek Revival style, as seen in a pioneer-era church, and for its fine limestone construction. The church building has the form, massing and details of the Greek Revival style, and its high-quality stone construction adds to its architectural significance. Fond du Lac County has fairly abundant deposits of limestone and it was a relatively common building material in nearby communities, often for the rear and party walls of commercial buildings. But, it was not as commonly used for entire buildings and there are no other examples of early limestone construction of this type in the Town of Alto, making this church architecturally distinctive. Its very high level of integrity, almost museum-like, adds to the architectural significance of the building and makes it well-known landmark in the area.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of the Zion Congregational Church is closely connected to the history of Dutch immigration to the Alto area and Dutch religious history in Wisconsin. In the nineteenth century, the area around Alto became a dense ethnic Dutch settlement, reportedly the oldest in the Midwest. The Zion Congregational Church was an early descendent of the first Dutch church founded in Alto and one of six churches the Dutch founded in the Town of Alto between 1847 and 1883. But, before the Dutch arrived, the Town of Alto began as many areas of southeastern Wisconsin did in the pioneer era.

In 1841, a Yankee from New York, Francis Bowman, settled in section 36. In 1844, several more Yankee families came to the town. In 1847, the Town of Alto was officially organized and all of the town officers had Yankee names. From a list of first year enlistees for the Civil War, it is apparent that the Town of Alto continued to have a thriving Yankee community in the mid-nineteenth century. By 1880, though, three-fourths of the town population were Dutch or of Dutch descent and the tiny village

¹ This footnote refers to the period of significance and construction dates of the building. The most concise reference for these dates is "History of Zion Congregational Gereformeede Gemeente," unpublished paper on file with the records of the Zion Congregational Church, Alto, Wisconsin.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Zion Congregational Church

Section 8 Page 2 Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

of Alto was the center of a large and thriving ethnic Dutch community whose families had also branched out in great numbers into nearby Waupun.²

In 1844, (Jan) Albertus Meenk came to America from Winterswijk in the province of Gelderland in the Netherlands. He spent a few months in Westfield, Chautauqua County, New York, then came to Milwaukee in 1845. He came to the Town of Alto in the spring, purchasing 80 acres in Section 25, land that stayed in the family for over 100 years. In the late summer of 1845, Meenk's parents and four other children followed Albertus to Alto. Meenk's older brother and family came, as well. The large Meenk family in Alto probably encouraged others to come to the area because in 1846 and 1847, 18 families from Winterswijk and two nearby towns settled in Alto. These Dutch immigrants were "Seceders," or persons who participated in the Secession of 1834 from the Dutch Reformed state church, and at first, they all worshiped together in their pioneer homes.³

In 1847, the Dutch immigrants in Alto built a small log church, and the congregation got a boost from its first formal pastor, Gerrit Baay, who took on the small church in the middle of 1848. Probably conducting the church under "Seceder" doctrine, Baay quickly became a formidable spiritual leader, although the church remained independent of any synod. Baay is also credited with the enthusiastic boosting of Alto in the Netherlands that resulted in even more Dutch settlers coming to the area. Unfortunately, Baay died in November of 1849, and the congregation entered a period of instability. In 1850, a missionary named Van Raalte of Holland, Michigan, came to Alto in hopes of forming the congregation into a Dutch Reformed Church, but this effort failed due to the dissension in the ranks.⁴

A short while later, Reverend Pieter Zonne, a follower of the Presbyterian denomination, came to Alto to preach and to try to form a Presbyterian congregation. No formal Presbyterian church was organized in Alto, but Zonne's two-year stay in Alto had a strong influence on many of the Dutch immigrants. After a few more years, in 1855, Reverend Seine Bolks, a pastor in the Milwaukee (Dutch) Reformed Church, was sent to Alto to, once again, try to establish a Reformed church there. In 1854, the Reformed Church had organized a diocese of Dutch Reformed congregations in Wisconsin and

² "Town of Alto Chronology," Fond du Lac County Local History [Internet] Web Site, http://www.wlhn.org/fond_du_lac/towns/alto/altochron.htm; Elton J. Bruins, "The Dutch-Immigrant Congregations of Alto, Wisconsin 1845-1900," *Origins*, Vol. VII, No. 1, April, 1989, p. 26.

³ Bruins, pp. 24-25; *Alto Reformed Church 1855-1955*, Pamphlet on file in the records of the Zion Congregational Church Alto, Wisconsin, pp. 6-9; Twilah DeBoer, "Dutch Settlers in Alto Township," Fond du Lac County Local History [Internet] Web Site, http://www.wlhn.org/fond_du_lac/towns/alto/altochron.htm.

⁴ Bruins, p. 26; DeBoer; *Alto Reformed Church*, pp. 6-7.

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Continuation Sheet

Zion Congregational Church

Section 8 Page 3 Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

Illinois. Bolks convinced most of the Dutch immigrants in Alto to form a Reformed Church affiliated with the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church.⁵

Although not documented in the Alto Reformed Church history, only a few years later, in 1858, twelve families broke away from the Reformed Church to form what was to become the Zion Congregational Church. One historic source indicates that these families left the Reformed Church over a dislike of the pastor and not over theological differences. The fact that the new church affiliated with the Presbyterian/Congregational denomination suggests that these families might have been influenced by Presbyterian Pieter Zonne and were uncomfortable in the formal Reformed church, even though these denominations were theologically related.⁶

In March of 1858, the congregation passed a resolution to build a church of limestone 42 x 30 feet at an estimated cost of \$500. In November of that same year, the church was completed and dedicated as the Hollandsche Gereformeede Zion Kerk te Alto, Wisconsin, or as it appears in their first record book, Hollandsche Gereformeede Pres. Kerk. In April of 1859, the congregation agreed to build a parsonage (not extant), and a barn (not extant) was also erected on the property⁷

While the Zion church has been known as a Congregational church, its early records refer to the church as Presbyterian, and its original name included the word Reformed. In the late nineteenth century, the records refer to the church as either Presbyterian or Congregational/Presbyterian. During the early twentieth century, the church was referred to consistently as the Zion Congregational Church. These name changes are confusing, but reflect some interesting denominational history of the Reformed, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches in the mid-nineteenth century.

Lutheran churches, of course, were a product of the Reformation, but a second set of protestant churches also emerged during this period. These churches were known as Reformed churches in Holland, Switzerland, and Germany; as Presbyterian in England and Scotland, and as Huguenot in France. When immigrants from these churches came to the new world, they established their own ethnically related churches, but with a common ancestry back to the churches formed from the Reformation. For example, Dutch immigrants established (Dutch) Reformed churches and Christian Reformed churches in America. Swiss and German immigrants established (German) Reformed churches and German Evangelical churches. The German Reformed and Evangelical churches merged

⁵ Bruins, pp. 26-27; *Alto Reformed Church*, pp. 8-9.

⁶ Bruins, pp. 27-28

⁷ Zion Congregational Church Register Book, 1858-1878, on file with the records of the Zion Congregational Church, Alto, Wisconsin.

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Continuation Sheet

Zion Congregational Church

Section 8 Page 4 Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

in 1934, then merged with the Christian and Congregational churches to form the United Church of Christ.⁸

Most Dutch immigrants in America form (Dutch) Reformed or Christian Reformed churches. But, some Dutch immigrants in Wisconsin joined the Presbyterian Church, which in policy and procedure was very close to the Reformed church at that time. The Presbyterian Church is closely tied to England and Scotland, but Presbyterian churches also appeared in France, Switzerland, Holland, and Ireland. Colonists from all of these countries brought the Presbyterian Church to America and began spreading the church westward.⁹

The Congregational Church is a later denomination that evolved from the Church of England in the late 1500s. It is historically thought of as the church of the Puritans, brought over with these early American settlers in the 1600s. At first, the Congregational Church did not actively push the denomination westward, but in 1801, it joined with the Presbyterian Church to form a "plan of union" where organizers from both denominations worked together to form churches on the western frontier. The agreement allowed a new congregation to select either a Congregational or Presbyterian pastor regardless of which denomination formed the church. Another group that brought the major denominations of the old Reformed churches (Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, and Reformed) together was the American Board for Foreign Missions, established with the Congregational Church in 1810, and the American Home Missionary Society, established in 1826, which was the most important organization for establishing congregations for these related churches in the old northwest.¹⁰

The closeness of the Congregational, Presbyterian, and (Dutch) Reformed churches in the mid-nineteenth century can provide some possible answers to the question of the Zion Congregational Church's name variations. It is possible that the families that left the Alto Reformed Church were influenced by Pieter Zonne, the Presbyterian missionary who would have been working under the Presbyterian-Congregational "plan of union," at the time he was in Alto. The Zion church founders may have used the names Presbyterian and Congregational interchangeably. Another possibility is that the use of Reformed and Presbyterian in their original name (in their record book) reflected the historic churches that came out of the Reformation. Or, it may have been as simple as the fact that the Congregational Church had a convenient synod nearby and the Presbyterians did not.

⁸ Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. 3*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Religion, p. 17-1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-1, 17-1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-1, 16-1, 17-1.

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Continuation Sheet

Zion Congregational Church

Section 8 Page 5 Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

In any event, in June of 1859, the church record book indicates that the members of the congregation agreed to adopt the "Presbyterian Confession of Faith" and to join the "Presbyterian Winnebago Convention." But, in fact, the Winnebago Convention or Conference was Congregational, not Presbyterian, giving weight to the idea that the congregation was using the two denominational names interchangeably. By 1878, the church was clearly Congregational, as shown in a dispute with the Winnebago Conference of the Congregational Church after the pastor of Zion church influenced the congregation to vote to officially join the Presbyterian Church. The conference blocked the move and helped install a new pastor, resulting in some Zion church families to leave and form a separate Presbyterian Church.¹¹

Around the same time as the new Presbyterian Church was built in Alto, Dutch immigrants built yet another church, a different Reformed church. At that time, each of the churches in Alto took on identifying names. Because of its stone construction, Zion Congregational Church became known as the "stone church," a name that has stuck with the building ever since.¹²

The loss of the Presbyterians and the aging of the congregation took a toll on the Zion church. The congregation still retained a pastor into the later 1880s, but after that time, the dwindling congregation was unable to support a pastor. Some services were still held for a few years, but by 1899, the Winnebago Conference of the Congregational Church asked the remaining members to meet to decide what to do about their church since they had no pastor and had had no services for some time. The conference wanted to acquire the property, but the members did not agree. In a meeting held in February of 1899, church members decided to keep the church alive, appointing a board of trustees that would have annual meetings and agreeing to maintain the church property.¹³

During the next few decades, the church building was used for occasional funerals, and the Board of Trustees held their annual meeting each year. The board was renting out the parsonage and much of the business involved the upkeep and rental of this building. In the 1920s, Anna Ridders Lammers led an effort to revitalize the church building and its cemetery. She compiled the names of the descendents of the church founders and helped start a perpetual care fund for the Oak Mound Cemetery. During this time, the cemetery association cleaned up the grounds and the building, helping

¹¹ Bruins, pp. 28-29; Zion Congregational Church Register Book, 1858-1878.

¹² Bruins, p. 29.

¹³"History of Zion Congregational;" Zion Congregational Church Register Book, 1879-1929, on file with the records of the Zion Congregational Church, Alto, Wisconsin; "Descendants of Alto Pioneers Keep Title to Old Stone Church, Used for Funerals Only for Nearly 30 Years," newspaper clipping on file with the records of the Zion Congregational Church, Alto, Wisconsin.

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Continuation Sheet

Zion Congregational Church

Section 8 Page 6 Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

preserve it for another generation. By the late 1930s, there were no more services in the church, funeral or otherwise, but the board remained active at its annual meeting, along with the cemetery association. During the 1930s and early 1940s, the annual meeting minutes and treasurer's report revealed that continuous maintenance was done in the cemetery, as well as to the parsonage that will still be rented. In 1956, the parsonage was sold and removed from the property.¹⁴

In 1958, the cemetery association received an offer for the church and its immediate surroundings, and the board initially accepted the offer. But, members pressured the board to rescind the sale. This action, plus the fact that it was the centennial year of the church, revitalized members, most of whom were still descendants of the early church founders. They raised money to install a new roof and make repairs to the building. They also instituted an annual church service so the building would remain a tax-free property according to state law. Since that time, the members have banded together once each year to clean and make repairs on the church building and hold their annual services. Much press has been generated on the annual occasions when the old stone church, once again, is used for its original purpose.¹⁵

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE

The Zion Congregational Church is architecturally significant at the local level because its well-preserved details make it a distinctive and important example of the Greek Revival style as seen in a pioneer-era religious building. Adding to its architectural significance is the building's distinctive high quality stone construction and its overall high integrity. The building has almost all of its original components and historic features, including an intact mid-nineteenth century interior.

According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan*, the Greek Revival style was the first national style commonly seen in Wisconsin, popular from 1830 to around 1870 in the state. Greek Revival buildings are formal, orderly, and symmetrical. Although most Greek Revival buildings in the state are of frame construction with clapboard or artificial siding, the style also adorned brick, fieldstone, and quarried stone buildings. There are a number of larger, high-style Greek Revival

¹⁴ "History of Zion Congregational; "Alto's Old Stone Church Reborn Yearly in Descendants Ceremony," *Fond du Lac Commonwealth Reporter*, 31 March 1961, newspaper clipping on file in the records of the Zion Congregational Church, Alto, Wisconsin; Zion Congregational Church Minutes and Treasurer's Reports, 1930-1942, on file with the records of the Zion Congregational Church, Alto, Wisconsin.

¹⁵ "History of Zion Congregational;" "Plan Service in Old Church," newspaper clipping from 18 September 1958, on file in the records of the Zion Congregational Church, Alto, Wisconsin.

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Continuation Sheet

Zion Congregational Church

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buildings in Wisconsin, but because the style was popular primarily during the state's pioneer era, style elements are seen most often on vernacular buildings in the form of symmetrical massing, regular fenestration, simple cornices and returned eaves, and entrances decorated with a transom and/or sidelights.¹⁶

The Zion Congregational Church has many elements of the Greek Revival style. Its rectangular plan has a symmetrical form and massing and symmetrical details. The regular fenestration of the side walls are a typical Greek Revival trait seen in small churches and school buildings during the pioneer era in Wisconsin. Multiple light sashes are typically seen in Greek Revival buildings and the well-preserved eight-over-eight-light sashes of this building help give it its style. The most important style elements of the building are the full pediment on the main elevation, the frieze, the returned eaves on the rear elevation, and the classical frontispiece decorating the main entrance.

Many churches and public buildings were constructed in Wisconsin during the pioneer era using details from the Greek Revival style. Yankees from New England poured into southern and central Wisconsin during the late 1830s, the 1840s, and the 1850s. The style was still popular in the east and Yankee settlers used it for both private residences and public buildings in the new territory. Some European immigrants built using traditional materials and methods they brought from their home countries, but most immigrants quickly embraced the popular American styles. For example, in 1857, the Dutch settlers in Alto constructed the first Alto Reformed Church building with Greek Revival style details, including a full pediment. This church was built around the same time as the Zion church, suggesting that the Dutch immigrants in Alto quickly adopted the American building styles of their Yankee neighbors.

Most of Wisconsin's pioneer-era Greek Revival style churches and schools have been lost in favor of new buildings, or have been significantly altered. The Zion church is a pristine example of the style, as used for this type of pioneer church building. The details are simple, reflecting the size and modest means of the congregation, yet they are formal and well-proportioned to the building. The full pediment is a strong classical detail, making a more formal statement than simple returned eaves. The large double-door entrance with the simple, classical, frontispiece also adds to the formal statement of the building. The Dutch settlers of the Zion church could not afford a large, elaborately detailed building, but their small stone church is an elegant, well-proportioned, beautiful example of the style.

¹⁶ Wyatt, Vol. 2, Architecture, p. 2-3.

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The Zion Congregational Church is also architecturally distinctive for its stone construction. According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan*, stone construction is found throughout Wisconsin and stone was used for the construction of buildings with high architectural styles as well as with simple vernacular forms. In constructing stone buildings, local masons took quarried stone and laid it up in sand and lime mortar. When the stone weathered, the buildings took on distinct visual qualities and colors that reflected the type of stone used and the place it was quarried from. There are concentrations of stone buildings from the early years of the Wisconsin territory in the lead mining region of southwestern Wisconsin, as well as important pockets of stone construction in areas just north of Milwaukee, in Dane and Sauk counties, near Waukesha, and in far northern Wisconsin. In other areas of the state, there are many examples, some clustered, of local quarried stone construction and individual stone buildings can be found in almost all areas of the state.¹⁷

Historical and architectural surveys of Fond du Lac county communities and rural areas have shown that there are considerable deposits of limestone and that quarried limestone was an important building material in the county. For example, in Ripon, about 10 miles north of this church, results from a residential survey and three historic districts, including a large downtown historic district, indicate that limestone was a common building material in that community. But, this building material was not used as much for entire buildings as it was for the side and rear walls of downtown commercial buildings. The downtown historic district includes only a few buildings entirely built of quarried limestone, but most of the brick-fronted commercial buildings have stone side and/or back walls. The residential survey in Ripon revealed that there are only four houses from the nineteenth century that are noted for their quarried limestone construction.

The Fond du Lac County reconnaissance survey revealed that the only other stone building in the Town of Alto is a small outbuilding. This suggests that while quarried limestone was an available material used frequently in a nearby community, it was not a common building material in the Town of Alto. Because all stone buildings are not common in the immediate vicinity, this building stands out for its type of construction and construction materials. The other factor that gives this building a distinctive appearance is the fine quality of the stone construction. The walls are not composed of the highest quality stone and include stone rubble. But, the regular coursing and high quality mortaring of the walls suggest a skilled mason and result in an attractive appearance. The decorative stones on the side wall and the unusual dark stone on the rear wall are also a distinctive characteristic of this building. Whether the dark stone represents a builder's mark or is symbolic of the church congregation, it helps make this building a distinctive fine example of pioneer-era stone construction.

¹⁷ Wyatt, Architecture, pp. 4-6—4-7.

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One of the reasons the stone construction of the building is still attractive after almost 150 years is the high level of integrity of the building. From its intact multiple-light openings, to the well-maintained stone walls, to the retention of the Greek Revival pediment and frontispiece, the exterior of this building has been exceptionally well-preserved. What is even more significant is the preservation of the mid-nineteenth century interior. With historic pews, old plaster walls, and the hanging oil lamps, the interior of this church is museum-like, similar to mid-nineteenth century buildings at Wisconsin's outstanding ethnic architecture museum, Old World Wisconsin. The only building that can compare to this one in time period and level of preservation may be the Little White Schoolhouse in Ripon, the small Greek Revival style schoolhouse where meetings took place that helped form the Republican Party. But, that building is a museum, while the Zion church is still, for all intents and purposes, a church.

The Zion Congregational Church is architecturally significant because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Greek Revival style, as seen in pioneer-era churches in Wisconsin. It is also significant because of its distinctive and high quality stone construction in an area where this type of construction is not common. Its museum-like level of integrity, with all of its historic features intact, including an intact 1858 interior, makes this building an important architectural resource that faithfully interprets mid-nineteenth century church construction and decoration in rural Wisconsin. For all of these reasons, the Zion Congregational Church is a local landmark and immensely worthy of listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Criteria Considerations A and D

Normally buildings owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes and cemeteries are not eligible for listing. In the case of the Zion Church and its associated cemetery these resources meet the conditions of the criteria considerations. The church's importance is for its architectural significance and the cemetery is a historic component of the landscape associated with the building.

___ End of Statement of Significance

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___ Insert References

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RESOURCES

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___ End of References

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___ Insert Boundary Descriptions

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Zion Congregational Church is as follows: a rectangular parcel beginning at the intersection of the west edge of pavement of Amity Road and an east-west line running along a fence just north of a gravel driveway, then west along the fence line 712 feet to a fence line in back of the Oak Mound Cemetery, then south along the fence line 132 feet to an east-west line running along a fence 132 feet south of the north fence, then east 712 feet along this line to the west edge of pavement of Amity Road, then north 132 feet along the west edge of pavement to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary for this property includes about half of the legal parcel owned by the Zion Congregational Church. The east half of the property is included in the nomination because it provides the historic setting for the church building and includes the historic cemetery that has a historic association to the building. It excludes the land behind the historic cemetery fence because its distance from the church building does not place it within the historic setting.

___ End of Boundary Descriptions

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____ Insert Photo Descriptions

Zion Congregational Church, Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. Photos by Carol Cartwright, January, 2005. Negatives on file in the Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Views:

- 1 of 6: Main (east) and north elevations, view from the northeast.
- 2 of 6: Site view showing north elevation, rear lawn and cemetery, view from the east.
- 3 of 6: South elevation, view from the southeast.
- 4 of 6: Front entrance, main (east) elevation, view from northeast.
- 5 of 6: Interior, view from the back of church.
- 6 of 6: Interior, north elevation wall showing window.

____ End of Photo Descriptions

SITE MAP
ZION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Town of Alto, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin

Map not to scale

