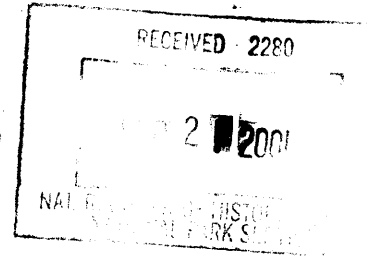


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

*2003  
RWB  
01000616*



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 Saint Peter's Grotto  
other names/site number Farmer South Dakota Grotto

**2. Location**

street & number 24245 Joe Street not for publication N/A  
city or town Farmer vicinity N/A  
state South Dakota code SD county Hanson code 061 zip code 57311

**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.)

Jay D. Voigt  
Signature of certifying official

08-25-2001  
Date

SD SHPO  
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

**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
- removed from the National Register.
- other,

(explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper      Date of Action

*Robert Sarge*      11/5/01

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**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**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</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 0

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

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Folk Art  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
roof Concrete  
walls Stone  
  
other Abalone and colored glass  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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.)

- 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)

Art \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1926-1933 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Saint Peter's Grotto  
Name of Property

Hanson County, South Dakota  
County and State

**Significant Dates**    1926  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

**Cultural Affiliation**    N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**    Father Peter N. Scheier

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

See Continuation Sheets

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### **9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Saint Peter's Grotto  
Name of Property

Hanson County, South Dakota  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** Less than 1

### UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>14</u>	<u>605732</u>	<u>4842038</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Lynda B. Schwan  
organization SD SHPO date January 22, 2001  
street & number 900 Governors Drive telephone 605-773-6056  
city or town Pierre state SD zip code 57501

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## Additional Documentation

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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)

Saint Peter's Grotto  
Name of Property

Hanson County, South Dakota  
County and State

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## Property Owner

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

name St John Neumann Church  
street & number 24245 Joe Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Farmer state SD zip code 57336

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**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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

The Saint Peter's Grotto is located in rural Hanson County, in the unincorporated community of Farmer. At the height of the community of Farmer in 1926, the town boasted of four elevators, two banks, three grocery stores and a hotel, along with other support businesses. After the beginning of the Depression, the community of Farmer began to diminish and has never revived.

There are common elements found throughout the Grotto. The Grotto measures thirteen feet and six inches by thirteen feet and six inches, square. At each corner is a turret which contributes to its overall dimensions. It is constructed of a variety of decorative elements, ranging in size and color. The source of this decorative building material includes rock from the Badlands and Black Hills of South Dakota, decorative petrified wood from North Dakota, sea shells from the Hawaiian Islands, marble from Tennessee and one rock from the Calista Catacombs at Rome, Italy. Other common elements include the use of crosses, arches, and decorative flower patterns.

Located on each corner of the Grotto is a turret. The turrets are constructed of a light gray stone. The top of each turret is designed to reflect castellation, so that between each arch is in-fill of a darker stone. The façade (west elevation) has an arched opening located in the center of the wall. The arch is designed of a lighter gray stone with a darker gray cap approximately 4 ½ feet high. On either side of the arch is a three-leaf pattern of light gray stone. The remainder of the wall is designed with a darker gray stone. The top of the wall has the same castellation pattern as the turrets.

The south, east and north elevations have a dark gray background of stone. The south elevation along with the east and north elevations have a water table. Located in the center of the wall is an avellan or avellane cross. The arms of the cross are meant to resemble a filbert nut. There are four triangles in a lighter gray stone creating a square effect around the cross. The top of the wall has the same castellation pattern as the turrets.

Atop the dome roof is a cupola. The base of the cupola has eight small arches that have a dark gray background with a light gray cross in the center of each arch. Four small arches extend into the center of the cupola opening and support a traditional Christian cross.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 & 8 Page 2

### Interior:

The three full walls have altars, which protrude approximately two feet from the floor. Located in the center of each altar is a statue of the Virgin Mary. At the two corners of the altar are engaged columns that support a rock arch. The capitals on the columns have a Byzantine decorative motif. Between the columns is a tile mosaic. The east wall has the main altar. It is the largest with dark gray stone arches below the altar and French crosses on either side of the altar. The north and south walls have smaller altars. Beneath each of the smaller altars are dark gray stone X designs. To either side of the altar are dark gray stone designs of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Numerous cross designs can be found in dark gray stone throughout the structure. One particular design is the Heart Cross, which resembles a flower. The petals of the cross are shaped like a heart in a medium colored gray stone with the center being a darker gray stone circle.

The drum of the dome has decorative dark stone elements around the entire opening making patterns of X's. There are four distinctive areas of the drum that have dark gray stone arches with letters in light gray stone. The letter spell out AVE MARIA which translates to Hail Mary. Atop the dome is the St. Andrews Cross. This is a cross that makes an X not a T.

### Statement of Significance

German immigrants settled Farmer, South Dakota in the late 1870's through the 1890's. The German settlers arrived from the Eifel region of Germany, an area that has no major cities. These immigrants practiced a very strong variety of Catholicism, which they installed in their new surroundings in Hanson County, South Dakota.

The first Catholic Church in Farmer was constructed in 1892. By 1909, a Catholic Boarding School opened on the northern edge of town. Father Scheier was assigned to St. Peter's in Farmer in 1918 and remained there until 1938. He was born and raised in Salem, approximately 15 miles east of Farmer. He was exposed to the construction trade as a boy and became comfortable with the materials which he used to express his creativity. During his seminary training he was exposed to various sites and gained inspiration. One of these ideas was expressed in the form of the Farmer Grotto on the grounds of St. Peter's. He started construction in 1926 and completed the project in 1933. According to Father Scheier, he used 125 sacks of cement, 20 tons of sand, 64 tons of rock gathered locally, 3 tons of decorative rocks and 4.5 tons of brick.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

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When he started the Grotto, Farmer was experiencing a time of great prosperity and good crops. Unfortunately, before he completed the Grotto, most businesses in town had failed due to the economic depression that the entire country was facing. The Depression did impede the construction of the Grotto thus making the project extend for seven years. The congregation had no money for the basics during this time and could not afford to extend anything extra to the construction of a grotto. To save the congregation money, Scheier functioned as the janitor for both the church and boarding school and paid for the operation of the school out of his own money. Father Scheier used personal funds for the design, materials and construction of the Grotto. The Grotto became a spiritual focal point of the parish during the most difficult period of their history.

Materials for the Grotto included stone from the Badlands and Black Hills of South Dakota. Father used his Model A Ford to make long trips to the western part of South Dakota to gather the needed materials. He also used materials from local sources, which included cement, sand, rock and brick. As Father Scheier had no formal training in architectural design or construction, the fact that he designed such an impressive structure which remains intact is impressive.

Folk art is loosely defined as art created through traditions within a specific locality or for a particular group of people. Often it is designed by individuals who were more influenced by local climate, available materials and ethnic traditions than by contemporary fashions and styles.

Father Scheier designed the Grotto in a folk art manner. Scheier never left the United States and never had the opportunity to view high architectural styles but he took elements from all styles that he came to know through local travels, books and articles and incorporated them into his design for the Grotto. While there is no proof that this was a conscious decision, it is one that is obviously reflected in the architecture of the Grotto. Many from the congregation asked the Father why he felt the need to constructed the Grotto, especially during a time of great hardship for the community. He never gave them answers and the congregation believed that it was just out of his goodness. The artistic merit of the Grotto can be seen in the heavy arches on thin columns, carved surface ornamentation on the capitals, the use of vibrant colors, the decorative crosses on the exterior in stone, and interior decoration of the upper parts of walls and undersides of domes.

The Grotto in Farmer is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places for its artistic merit under criterion C. The Grotto reflects the folk art style which is not commonly found in religious construction in South Dakota.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 & 10 Page 4

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## Bibliography

Argus Leader. "The Grotto: Paradise on the prairie loses luster over the years." Steve Young. 22 April 1986.

Daily Republic. "Grotto at heart of Farmer's history, but in need of repair." Barbara Dykstra. 30 September 1994.

Hamlin, Talbot. *Architecture Through the Ages*. G.P. Putnam's Sons: New York, 1940.

Saylor, Henry. *Dictionary of Architecture*. John Wiley and Sons: New York, 1952.

## Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is an imaginary line encompassing only the St. Peter's Grotto. Starting at a point 15 feet northeast of the northeast corner of the building the line runs west to a point 15 feet northwest of the northwest corner of the building, the boundary then runs south to a point 15 feet southwest of the southwest corner, it then runs east to a point 15 feet southeast of the southeast corner, the boundary then runs north to its original starting point.

## Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the St. Peter's Grotto that has historically been part of the St. Peter's Catholic Church that maintains historic integrity. The rest of the property has been excluded based on date of construction.