

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

---

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 03000764

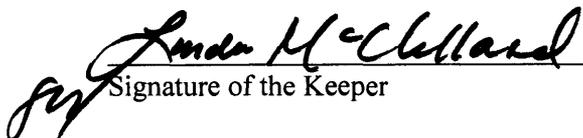
Property Name: St. Martin's Catholic Church and Grotto

County: Fall River State: South Dakota

N/A

Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

May 30, 2005  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8

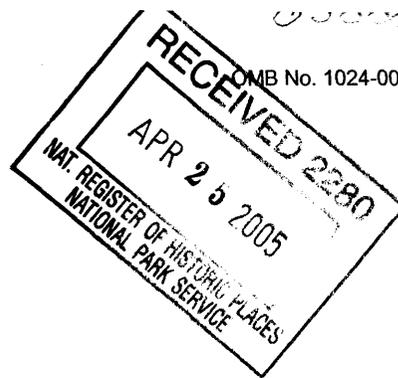
The Period of Significance is, hereby, revised to read, "1907, 1925, 1933" to correspond with the date the former store was converted for use as a church building and the dates when the other resources that complete the architecturally significant ensemble were constructed. "1885" is, hereby, dropped from the entry for Significant Dates because the documentation indicates that the church building's significance began when the former store was modified to serve as a church.

-----  
The South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

**National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

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. Martin's Catholic Church and Grotto  
other names/site number N/A

#### 2. Location

street & number Lot Six Block 5 not for publication N/A  
city or town Oelrichs Vicinity N/A  
state South Dakota Code SD county Fall River code 047 zip code 57785

#### 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.)

Jay D. Voigt  
Signature of certifying official

04-20-2005  
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 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

*Linda McClelland* 5-30-05

**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	
3	0	Buildings
0	0	Sites
0	0	Structures
1	0	Objects
4	0	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

---

## 6. Function or Use

---

### Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility  
Religion Church-Related Residence  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Vacant/Not in Use Sub: Vacant/Not in Use  
Domestic Single Dwelling  
Recreation and Culture Work of Art  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

## 7. Description

---

### Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

No Style  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Stone  
Roof Metal  
Walls Wood  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Other Rock  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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)

Architecture

---

---

---

---

**Period of Significance**

1885-1933

**Significant Dates** 1885, 1907,  
1925, 1933

**Significant Person** N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** Father Gerhard Stakemeir: Builder

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

See Continuation Sheets

---

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

---

(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: N/A

---

## 10. Geographical Data

---

**Acreage of Property** Less than one

### UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>13</u>	<u>643771</u>	<u>4782330</u>	3	<u>13</u>	<u>643803</u>	<u>4782322</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>13</u>	<u>643824</u>	<u>4782322</u>	4	<u>13</u>	<u>643828</u>	<u>4782341</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

---

## 11. Form Prepared By

---

name/title Delores Muhm and Stephen Rogers, Chris Nelson (SHPO Staff)  
organization State Historic Preservation Office date 10 March 2005  
street & number 1111 Paisley Terrace telephone (605) 347-5811  
city or town Sturgis state SD zip code 57785

---

## 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)

St. Martin's Catholic Church and Grotto  
Name of Property

Fall River County, South Dakota  
County and State

---

## Property Owner

---

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

name Saint Martins Catholic Church of Oelrichs South Dakota Historical Society c/o Delores Muhm

street & number 1111 Paisley Terrace telephone 605-720-5811

city or town Sturgis state SD zip code 57785

---

**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 Reduction 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

---

## Physical Description:

St. Martin's Church is located in the small town of Oelrichs, South Dakota. The church property features a rectory and a small grotto, a shrine to the Virgin Mary. The church and rectory are both simple vernacular buildings that have seen limited alterations. Constructed between 1885 and 1933 the property continued to serve as the Catholic Church in Oelrichs until being closed in 1999. Sold to a private owner in 1999, the rectory will be used as a residence and the church and grotto will be maintained intact.

### **Church Contributing 1885**

The single story church has a rectangular floor plan and features a stone foundation, aluminum siding, and a standing seam metal roof. The church faces west and features a gable roof entryway topped with a hip roof bell tower, centered on the façade. The bell tower roof has brackets supporting the corners, decorative finials, and a cross on top. The front stoop has three concrete steps and simple wood handrails. The entry is a pair of solid wooden doors. Above the doors is a pair of two-light windows divided with vertical mullions.

The entryway and bell tower were added in 1907 when the store was converted into a church. They were added using the same simple construction materials as the store. The addition of the central gabled entry way and hipped bell tower are vernacular characteristics of rural South Dakota churches.

The north and south sides of the building feature three, simple one-over-one double hung windows evenly spaced. The rear (east elevation) has no openings.

### **Rectory Contributing 1925**

The one and one-half story rectory is located behind (east of) the church and faces south. The square plan, gable front building has a stone foundation and clapboard siding. The roof is metal and has a brick chimney. All windows feature a simple wooden lintel. There is an earth floor, hand dug basement with windows on the west and east sides of the house.

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

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page #   2  

---

The façade features a one-story, hip roof porch with five turned posts. A set of wooden steps provides access to the porch between the second and third posts. A solid rail runs between the posts. Within the porch the building has three bays on this elevation. The door is left of center and in line with the front steps. On each side of the door is a large one-over-one double hung window. Above the porch is a single one-over-one window centered under the gable.

The west elevation features two single one-over-one windows. The east elevation has a centered door and two single windows located to the right of the door. The north elevation has a one-over-one window and a smaller one-over-one window on the ground floor. And a single one-over-one window on the upper floor, centered under the gable.

**Privy**  
**Contributing**  
**Circa 1933**

Located at the northeast corner of the rectory is a small, shed roof privy. The door and a small square window are on the south elevation of the building.

**Grotto**  
**Contributing**  
**1933**

The Grotto is located between the church and rectory. Built circa 1933 under the direction of Father Gerhard Stakemeir, the grotto, a shrine to the Virgin Mary, is made of rock, fossils, petrified moss and wood collected from Wind Cave Park.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 1

---

### Significance:

St. Martin's Catholic Church and Grotto is historically significant under Criterion C, as the Church and rectory are fine examples of vernacular religious buildings in Western South Dakota and also because of the Grotto's artistic value. Individually the buildings and the Grotto are fine representations of their types but collectively they are even more significant.

The town of Oelrichs in Fall River County, South Dakota, was started by Harry Oelrichs a rich German immigrant. With the backing of the Anglo-American Cattle Company, Oelrichs bought up several ranching operations and soon owned the largest cattle operation in western South Dakota. The town site of Oelrichs was the headquarters for the ranch. Oelrichs determined that shipping dressed beef would be more profitable than live cattle and had a packinghouse constructed. With more and more settlers coming in and fencing land the Anglo-American Cattle Company did not survive past the turn of the century. The little town that had started quickly never reached a population greater than 350.

Constructed in 1885 the Catholic Church was built as a store. In 1907 an entry way and bell tower were added when the Catholic Church purchased the building. Although it has been resided, the building retains a high degree of integrity. The rectory, built in 1925, also is a highly intact example of church related residence; even to the point of not having running water or an indoor bathroom as of 1999. Along with the residence is the contributing privy.

Vernacular churches in South Dakota are simple structures built with the available material and may or may not be an interpretation of an architectural style. Early churches were predominately gabled-roofed structures built in a folk tradition or from a pattern book designs.<sup>1</sup> Some were simple buildings with dirt floors while others were conventional, unadorned frame buildings that usually included a central bell tower on the façade.<sup>2</sup> The denomination and ethnic background of the congregation would also influence the style of the building.<sup>3</sup> According to the monograph *Building South Dakota: A Historical Survey of the State's Architecture to 1945*, an archetypal church features simple detailing, plain siding, and a central tower.<sup>4</sup> Although St. Martin's was built as a store and then converted to a church, the change was very compatible. The addition of the bell tower and entrance made the

---

<sup>1</sup> David Erpestad and David Wood. *Building South Dakota*. (Pierre: SD, South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 1997), 60.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 69.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 2

church look like an early 20<sup>th</sup> century church in South Dakota. The gable front rectory was also a popular form of house design in early 20<sup>th</sup> century South Dakota.

The most impressive feature of the property is the Grotto, which, aside from its religious function, is a unique artistic icon. Constructed circa 1933 under the direction of German Catholic priest Father Stakemeir, the Grotto is fashioned out of rock, petrified wood and moss, and fossils taken from Wind Cave National Park which is forty mile north of Oelrichs. The car tunnels leading through Wind Cave National Park were being enlarged in the late 1920s and early 1930s, which left vast amounts of debris. Parishioner Nick A. Bogner used a trailer and his Buick to haul the rocks from the passes to aid Father Stakemeir's project.<sup>5</sup> Father Stakemeir and Bogner were not charged for the rocks and could haul as many as they needed.<sup>6</sup> In addition to parishioners, Father Stakemeir was aided by C.B. Donahue and D.W. Hiatt of the Gold Crest Art Shop in Custer.<sup>7</sup>

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. The St. Martin's Grotto exhibits many of these folk art characteristics. The rocks available from the Black Hills supplied the materials for the grotto. Also, the grotto was designed off of a vision by Father Stakemeir and whatever personal inspirations he lent to the project.

Grottos are found throughout the Midwest and are usually constructed of concrete, glass, stone, ceramics, and sometimes whole objects.<sup>8</sup> German immigrants were primarily responsible for building grottos and other vernacular religious structures in the Midwest, which are now considered as some of the most important folk art in the region.<sup>9</sup> Grottos are a derivative of European tradition that primarily German Catholic priest brought with them to the new world.<sup>10</sup> The Midwest has the highest concentration of grottos of anywhere in the world.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Nick J. Bogner, personal correspondence, 18 June 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Editor, "Father Stakemeir Building Grotto," *The Oelrichs Advocate*. 30 March 1933, vol. 26, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Niles. *Grottos of the Midwest*,  
<http://ww2.lafayette.edu/~niless/awsthome.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Peyton Smith. *Grottos of the Midwest: Religion and Patriotism in Stone*,  
<http://csumc.wisc.edu/newsletter/grottos.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 3

---

The *Churches in South Dakota* historic context places the St. Martins Catholic Church in the period of permanent pioneer settlement 1858-1893. Catholics were the largest denomination in the state by population during this period and their numbers continued to grow. Increased congregation sizes necessitated the construction of auxiliary church facilities and provided the economic means for expansion.

Serving the Catholic Church in Oelrichs since 1907, St. Martin's has undergone very few changes. The town of Oelrichs has seen few changes and the Church remains a focal point in the small rural community. The buildings are highly significant on their own, but along with the Grotto are significant under Criterion C. The Grotto reflects a folk art style which is not commonly found in religious construction in South Dakota. Because they are significant for their architecture and artistic distinction, they are allowable under Criteria Consideration A.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9, 10 Page # 1

---

### **Bibliography:**

Bogner, Nick J. personal correspondence, 18 June 2004.

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

*Fall River County Pioneer Histories*. Fall River County Historical Society. Fall River County, SD. 1976.

"*Father Stakemeir Building Grotto*," *The Oelrichs Advocate*. 30 March 1933, vol. 26, p.1. L.D. Stonecypher, editor.

*In the Shadow of the Butte: A History of Oelrichs and the Surrounding Area*. Oelrichs Historical Society. State Publishing Co., Pierre: SD, 1984

Niles, Susan. Grottos of the Midwest. <http://ww2.lafayette.edu/~niless/awsthome.htm>.

Smith, Peyton. *Grottos of the Midwest: Religion and Patriotism in Stone*, <http://csumc.wisc.edu/newsletter/grottos.htm>.

### **Boundary Description:**

Lot Six Block Five in the Town of Oelrichs, Fall River County, South Dakota

### **Boundary Justification:**

The boundaries include the property historically associated with the Church and Grotto