

000 10/11/1985
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only
received AUG 5 1985
date entered SEP 5 1985

1. Name

historic St. Joseph's Church

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number Main Street between Church and Fourth Streets N/A not for publication

city, town Pierz N/A vicinity of congressional district

state Minnesota code 22 county Morrison code 097

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name St. Joseph's Church Corporation

street & number N/A

city, town Pierz N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 56364

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Morrison County Courthouse

street & number 2nd Street Southeast at Broadway

city, town Little Falls state Minnesota 56345

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Minnesota Statewide Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Minnesota Historical Society
Ft. Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u> N/A </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

St. Joseph's Church is located on a slight rise at the center of the central Minnesota community of Pierz. The church, by virtue of its size and placement, is the most imposing structure in the town. The building faces west, and is set back from Main Street by parallel rows of evergreen trees that frame the entry walk. A parking lot and playing field lie to the north of the church. The rectory and a Sister's House lie to the south.

The church, of brick veneered wood-frame construction, is styled in the simplified Gothic Revival predominant among late 19th century church structures. A centrally placed tower above a single front entry doorway projects slightly from the front facade. Louvered, pointed arched openings in the tower conceal bells. The spire above is topped with an iron cross. The side facades are divided into nine bays, with single pointed arched windows centered in the bays. A single gabled roof covers the main body of the church. There is an apse at the east end.

The interior of the church contains a barrel vaulted nave separated from side aisles by columns with inwardly scrolling capitals. Simply-detailed wood pews face the apse at the east end. Colored glass windows provide light to the aisles, and are also found in the upper portion of the apse. The floor has diagonally-laid planks which are exposed under the seating areas.

The brick veneer uses a common grade cream-colored brick. Reddish-orange colored brick is used to outline the windows and piers, for crosses that are placed above the side windows, and for the date "1888" that appears on the front of the tower.

Several alterations were made early in the life of the church. About 1907 an addition was made to the apse to accommodate several offices. On the exterior, the outer walls of the apse were pushed out so that they were flush with the side walls of the main body of the church. In 1909 the basement was excavated and finished to provide for a winter chapel. Small enclosed stairwells were added at the center of the north and south sides of the church. In 1913, the interior was redecorated, resulting in the present stenciled decorative motifs found on the walls of the side aisles and in the apse. More recently, all exterior doors have been replaced with doors of insulated metal.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1886–88 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

St. Joseph's Church in Pierz is significant as the central element among a significant concentration of southern German Catholic immigrants who settled in the vicinity of Pierz beginning in the late 1860s. Much of this settlement was influenced by the Reverend Francis Pierz, an early and effective missionary in the region, after whom the town has been named. Father Pierz, who came to Minnesota in 1838, encouraged German settlement through widely distributed articles and pamphlets. Pierz donated his farm to the fledgling St. Joseph's Parish, and, at age seventy, served as its first resident priest. The present brick veneered structure was built in 1886–88 on the site of the first church, and is the site which has come to be most closely associated with the well-remembered figure. The church building is a large, well-preserved example of the box-type Gothic Revival church typically built in the area.

Surrounding the community of Pierz is a fertile farming belt, originally known as the Rich Prairie. This area received settlement beginning about 1865. The first settlers, and most of the people who followed, were immigrants from the Carniola region of the Austro-Hungarian Republic. Many of these immigrants were influenced by the writings of Father Pierz, which described the area in glowing terms. The Germans were by far the largest ethnic group in the area, and were strongly tied to the church and its institutions. For many years, the community did not have a separate public school. Most of the area residents attended the church-run school, and there were too few other families to support a separate publicly-run school.

Father Pierz played a prominent role in the early history of the area. Pierz had come to Minnesota in 1838 as a missionary, and was first located at Grand Portage. Following the establishment of the Diocese of St. Paul he was sent to operate a mission at Crow Wing, and later at Belle Prairie. During the Indian uprisings in the 1860s his negotiations with the Chippewa were influential in keeping that group at peace. In the late 1860s his health began to fail. In 1871, he retired to the German settlement at Rich Prairie, and spent the final years of his active ministry as a parish priest for the newly-organized St. Joseph's Parish. He evidently took special interest in this parish, and donated to it several hundred acres of farmland that he had acquired.

The present St. Joseph's Church replaced the earlier church that had been established by Father Pierz. Built in 1886–88, the church is larger than other parish churches in the area. It is built in the simplified Gothic Revival styling popular at the time, and probably served as the model for later similarly styled churches. The church has not been significantly altered, and has been very well maintained.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nomlated property 3.31 acres

Quadrangle name Pierz, Minn.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

15	414540	5092200
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

--	--	--

G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

From a point beginning at the northeast corner of Outlot 17, Section 8, Township 40 North of Range 30 West, due south 300 feet, thence due west 480 feet, thence, due north 300 feet, thence due east 480 feet to the point of beginning.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas L. Jenkinson and Norene Roberts

organization Historical Research, Inc.

date March 20, 1985

street & number 5535 Richmond Curve

telephone (612) 929-2921

city or town Minneapolis

state Minnesota 55410

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Russell W. Fridley
State Historic Preservation Officer

date 7/11/85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 9/5/85

Attest:

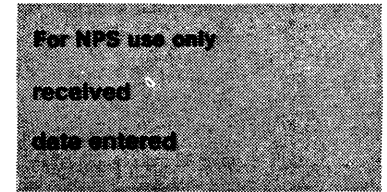
Chief of Registration

date

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

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St. Joseph's Church, Pierz, Morrison County, MN



Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

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Furlan, William P. In Charity Unfeigned. Patterson, New Jersey:
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McDonald, Sister Grace, O.S.B. "Father Francis Pierz." Minnesota
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National Park Service

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

for Keeper Melvin Lynn
1/19/89

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**Note: These changes apply to
St. Joseph's Church in Morrison
County, Minnesota.**

REFERENCE NUMBER: 85001998

STATE: MINNESOTA

COUNTY: Morrison

RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC): Church of St. Joseph (Catholic)

CITY:

VICINITY OF:

ADDRESS:

CERTIFICATION DATE:

REMOVED DATE:

COMMENTS:

Nina M. Archabal

**Nina M. Archabal
State Historic Preservation Officer**

JUN 17 1988

Date