

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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received AUG 29 1985

date entered SEP 26 1985

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

## 1. Name

historic St. Martin's Catholic Church

(CY00-2)

and/or common Loučky Church

## 2. Location

street & number N/A

N/A not for publication

city, town DeWeese

vicinity of

state Nebraska

code 31

county Clay

code 035

## 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 checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious occasionally
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Clay County Historical Society

street & number N/A

city, town Clay Center

N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska

## 5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number N/A

city, town Clay Center

state Nebraska

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date On-going  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historic Society

city, town Lincoln

state Nebraska

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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. Martin's Church, located in rural Clay County, Nebraska, is a vernacular Gothic structure built in 1907-08. This one story rectangular structure is of frame construction with an entry tower dominating the east facade. The basic structure measures 32'6" by 48'6" although there are small projections at each side of the altar space. The church sets on a concrete foundation and has a wood-shingled roof. In near original condition, the interior features pressed metal ceiling and wall covering. A reduced version of original chapel is also located on the grounds.

St. Martin's Catholic church, constructed in 1907-08, is situated on the plains of Clay County, Nebraska approximately one-half mile north and 2½ miles west of Deweese (1980 pop. 69). This one-story church is of frame construction with an entry tower dominating the east facade. A bell cast by Stuckstede and Bros. of St. Louis, Missouri is mounted in this tower directly behind the louvered window openings. Gothic detailing prevails in this simple vernacular building in the shape of the window and door openings as well as in the window mullions. The circular window above the front entrance archway is a vernacular interpretation of the Rayonnant style of Gothic architecture which was characterized by radiating ornamental mullions within Gothic window openings, usually as the top portion of the traditional arched windows. The basic structure measures 32'6" by 48'6" although there are small projections at each side of the altar space which house the sacristy and a storage area. The church sits on a concrete foundation and has a wood-shingled roof.

In August 1973, one month after the church closed for regular services, lightning struck the cross on top of the bell tower and the resulting fire completely destroyed the top of the steeple and bell tower. The original steeple featured a trio of narrow Gothic louvered windows on all four facades of the bell tower. The former spire also had a taller, more steeply-pitched roof. This portion of the church was reconstructed by the Clay County Historical Society who subsequently acquired the property. The current steeple is typologically the same as the original, although the details are slightly different--the overall tower height is somewhat shorter, and the trio of windows in the bell tower were replaced by singular round-arched louvered windows, one on each facade.

The interior of St. Martin's is in near original condition due to the fact that Vatican II rulings had not yet been enforced in this parish prior to the 1973 closure. Notable decorative features include the pressed metal ceiling and wall covering, the 14 Stations of the Cross and the ornate statuary adorning the altars. St. Martin, patron saint of farmers, is depicted as the central figure on the High Altar (see photo #8). The lower portion of one of the Low Altars is removable and was opened at Easter time to reveal a statue representing Christ in the tomb (see photo #9). A choir loft is located at the east end of the church. This space also houses the organ and provides an access by ladder to the bell tower. (See photo #10).

# 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 type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) ethnic

Specific dates 1907

Builder/Architect J. H. Craddock, Arch.; John E. King, Builder

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

St. Martin's Catholic Church is ethnically significant for its association with Clay County, Nebraska Czech immigrants. Pride and national solidarity were demonstrated by these settlers in establishing a secure religious environment for their families. Architecturally, the church is significant for its association with prominent Nebraska architect James H. Craddock, a designer famous for his public buildings and churches.

The first Czech settlers came to Clay County in 1874 and formed what is actually one of the smallest Czech settlements in Nebraska, a state heavily populated by this ethnic group.

What was to become St. Martin's Catholic parish was founded in the late 1880's by Moravian immigrants (Moravia is a state in Czechoslovakia) native to the villages of Upper and Lower Loučky. These settlers located in Spring Ranch township in Clay County, Nebraska and called their "community" of adjoining farms Loučky after their homelands. In the first years, a Czech priest from Iowa came to the area every six to twelve months to conduct Holy Mass and serve sacraments, usually in a local dugout residence. Until this church was erected in 1907, St. Martin's parish had Czech-speaking priests from other towns say Mass on an oftentimes sporadic basis. In 1899, a woman donated her home to be used for a chapel and this structure was moved to a location across the road from the present structure. This chapel was so small (16 by 24 feet) that during funerals, the body had to remain outside for lack of space.

In 1906, Father Matej Nemeč was assigned to Fairfield, Nebraska, a town several miles east of the chapel site. Father Nemeč held services every other Sunday at Loučky's Chapel and with his help a contract to build a new church building was let in November 1907. During construction this new church was destroyed by a tornado, but work began again in the spring of 1908 and by that fall the new church was completed. This edifice, located just across a county road south of the old chapel and cemetery, was named St. Martin's after the patron saint of farmers. It is believed that the first Mass was said in the new church on Christmas Day 1908. The congregation totaled 40 families all of Czech descent. For 40 years, Czech was the only language spoken during church services.

After completion of the church, the original chapel was moved to a location south of the new building, cut down to 12 by 16 feet, and used as a coal and storage shed.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Deweese, Nebraska

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	4	6	4	4	3	6	0	4	4	6	8	3	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet Jeffries Spencer, Cultural Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date July, 1985

street & number 1500 R Street telephone 402/471-4767

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

# 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 James A. Hanson

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date 8-8-85

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

Shelva Byron  
Keeper of the National Register

date 9/26/85

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet

DESCRIPTION

Item number

7

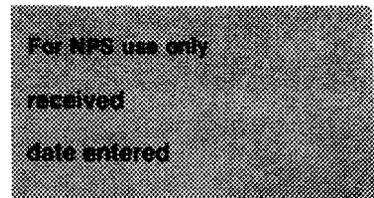
Page 2

Also located on the church grounds directly south of the church is the reduced version of the original chapel which is now used for storage. (See photo # 5). A windbreak of cedar trees surrounds the property.

St. Martin's Church is now owned by the Clay County Historical Society who is actively involved in preserving the building. The church is opened for tours by appointment. Weddings and other functions may also be scheduled.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet    SIGNIFICANCE    Item number    8    Page    2

In the summer of 1973, St. Martin's Church closed for regular services due to dwindling membership. The property is now owned by the Clay County Historical Society.

St. Martin's Church has ethnic significance for its association with the Czech immigrants in Clay County. The first Czechs to settle in Clay County arrived in 1874 and established one of the smallest Czech colonies in Nebraska, a state heavily populated by this nationality. After the Homestead Act of 1862 thousands of Czech settlers had come to Nebraska in search of land. This agriculturally oriented group were fleeing an overpopulated country and found the vast land spaces in Nebraska very inviting.

The fact that this small Clay County colony had the where-with-all to establish a parish and erect and support a church building during a period of time when Czechs were actually being oppressed in certain areas of the midwestern United States, demonstrates the pride and national solidarity of these people. This ethnic parish provided the security and unity the immigrants needed after arriving in a new land and promoted the preservation of the Czech language.

Architecturally, this church is significant for its association with prominent Nebraska architect James H. Craddock (1856-1932). Craddock practiced out of both Lincoln and Omaha for over forty years. He was famous for his design of public buildings and churches as well as private residences. Active in politics himself, he was a Nebraska State Representative in 1917. Craddock was a native of Connecticut and emigrated to Nebraska in 1885 after studying architecture at the Mystic River Institute in his home state.

St. Martin's Catholic Church is perhaps the most modest of the 35 Nebraska churches Craddock designed. Most Craddock churches are more ostentatious than this simple frame structure (see, for example, O'Connor Church Complex, Greeley County, Nebraska, NRHP). The interior and exterior of St. Martin's are virtually unaltered and exemplify a fine vernacular interpretation of the Gothic Revival architectural style.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Verbal Boundary Description and Justification  
Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 2

The St. Martin's Church property is as a rectangular tract of land 200 ft. by 165 ft. that can be described as follows:

Commencing at a point 100 feet West of the Northeast corner of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 35, Township 5N, Range 8W, then West 200 feet along the North line of said Section 35, then South 165 feet parallel to the West line of said Section 35, then east 200 feet parallel to the North line of said Section 35, then North 165 feet parallel to the West line of said Section 35 to the point of beginning. This includes all the historically associated property.