

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

HIST. PRES. DIV.

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received APR 30 1986

date entered 7-11-86

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

1. Name

historic NORWEGIAN EVANGELIC LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CEMETERY

and/or common Country Coon Prairie Church and Coon Prairie Cemetery

2. Location

street & number Intersection of Coon Prairie Road and East Coon Prairie Rd not for publication

city, town Town of Viroqua X vicinity of Westby (Post Office Route # 3)

state Wisconsin code 55 county Vernon code 123

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

4. Owner of Property

name Westby - Coon Prairie Lutheran Church, Att.: Country Coon Prairie Church Preservation

street & number 500 Main Street

city, town Westby vicinity of state Wisconsin 54667

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Vernon County Court House

street & number

city, town Viroqua state Wisconsin 54665

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___X no

date 1976 ___ federal ___X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State Street

city, town Madison state Wisconsin

JUL 2 1986

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Sited picturesquely approximately two miles southeast of Westby, the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church on Coon Prairie is designed in the Gothic Revival style of the early 20th century. Designed by Albert Parkinson of La Crosse, Wisconsin and constructed by the local contractor Theodore Thorson in 1909-1910, this gable roofed red brick church structure is 90 feet long and 42 feet wide. A hip roofed sacristy projects from the south side of the apse and a tall chimney (extended when the steam heating plant was installed in 1922) rises from the shingled roof at the east end of the church. Flanked by twin towers, 12 feet square and 80 feet high, that support octagonal steeples topped by metal finials, the facade of this Gothic Revival church exhibits a large, pointed arched stained glass window and entry portal and pointed arched belfry openings. Ornamented by a series of blind pointed arches filled with small recessed rectangular windows along the front gable, by a stylized cross in the gable peak, and by battlements along the top edge of the towers, the brick surfaces are decorated further by articulated brick hood molds over the windows, with white dressed-stone trim on the windows, battlements, tower stages, and entry portal, and by white stone window lintels and water table. This rather plain but imposing church is further characterized by pointed arched stained glass windows with wooden quatrefoil tracery and by slim buttresses on the side elevations. A stone block inscribed "Gud Alene Aeren" To God Alone Be All The Glory is imbedded in the brick work of the facade. Concrete steps lead to the double leafed entrance door in the front facade and to the sacristy entrance door while the south side entrance into the vestibule is at ground level. Bordered by the Coon Prairie Cemetery on the east and south sides, the church is bound by an iron fence on the north and west sides.

Characterized by general simplicity of design and decoration, the interior of the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church exhibits plain painted surfaces and natural wood floors. Based on the long processional early Christian church form, the interior plan of this Gothic Revival church is comprised of a vestibule, nave, apse and sacristy. Ornamental Gothic-styled rib vaults terminating in corbels attached to the side elevations visually divide the nave space into four bays and the five-sided apse into two bays. Pointed stained glass windows obtained from the Ford Brothers Glass Company of Minneapolis illuminate the nave space created without transept or clerestory. A gallery lighted by a large pointed arched stained glass window formation and a stairway in the north tower as well as a stairway to the church basement in the south tower are located at the rear of the church. An additional stairway to the basement is situated off the sacristy. A complete kitchen, rest rooms, various storage areas, and the heating plant are located in the full length basement of the church. The original altar and communion rail purchased from the Fond du Lac Church Furniture Company⁴ remain in the church. An altar painting representing the Baptism of Jesus painted by H. Grunstin in 1891 that was saved from the 1909 fire in the previous church (presently removed for restorative work) is the focal point of the altar.⁶ In 1921, the bronze memorial plaque listing the 82 men from the Coon Prairie congregation who served in WW I was placed in the church.

Extraordinarily well preserved, the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church on Coon Prairie has suffered only minimal alteration in conjunction with routine maintenance since its construction in 1909-1910. A steam heating plant and a kitchen was constructed in the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church and Cemetery

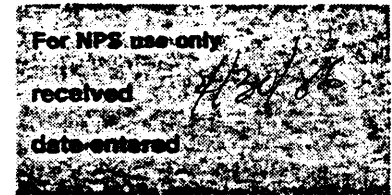
Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

1



basement and the basement floor and the south side wall of the church were repaired during the first major alteration and repair of the church in 1922.⁸ The traditional Christian ecclesiastical interior decoration painted by the O.J. Oyen Interior Decorating Company of La Crosse in 1918 was eliminated when the church was redecorated in 1958.⁹ Paneled wainscoting around the interior church walls used to cover the cracking plaster was added in 1981. Also in 1958 under the impetus of a Country Church preservation campaign and with funds from the newly established Country Church Repair Fund, the Coon Prairie Lutheran congregation installed a new furnace (replacing the steam heating plant added in 1922), a new front door and steps, sanctuary carpeting, and a loudspeaker system in addition to lowering the pulpit in the church.¹⁰ In February of 1965, steeple and roof repairs were authorized by the Trustees of the congregation and later in 1970, some repainting took place.¹¹ The kitchen constructed in the basement in 1922 was updated and rest rooms were installed at the east end in the basement of the church in 1971.¹² The present front steps were installed in 1974.¹³ The stained glass windows were releaded and repaired in 1947 by Henry Chap.¹⁴

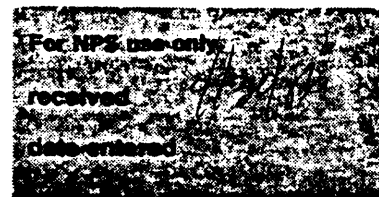
Sited along with the church in the northwest corner of the original half-quarter section of land purchased by the congregation in 1855, the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church Cemetery encompasses most of the 15 acres of church property that remained after the parsonage farm (65 acres) was sold in 1918.¹⁵ Apparently used as early as 1855 when Pastor Stub's infant daughter was buried, the grave sites indicate the south section nearest the church is the original cemetery site.¹⁶ The far northeast section at the rear of the church was made available c. 1912,¹⁷ at which time provisions for the road through the rear churchyard was included in the plan.¹⁸ More of the property south of the church was used to enlarge the cemetery in the 1940s.¹⁹ **

The L-shaped cemetery, still used as the Westby-Coon Prairie Lutheran Church Cemetery, is characterized by brick entrance posts and winding roads lined by evergreen trees, probably planted before the turn of the century. Most prominent among the cemetery stones is the Egyptian obelisk of Barre granite erected in 1923 as a memorial to Rev. and Mrs. Halvor Halvorsen,²⁰ who served the parish almost 50 years (1872-1921) during its period of greatest influence. An area at the southeast end developed by the Syerson-Funk American Legion Post No. 155 as a memorial for all the wars fought by the United States from the Revolutionary War of 1776 through the Vietnam War features rows of white crosses, an American flag, and wooden cannons. Operated as an incorporated association,²¹ the Coon Prairie Cemetery is governed by a board elected by the congregation.

** The cemetery is being included here^{only} as a significant landscaping feature which adds to the integrity of the overall historic setting of the rural Norwegian Lutheran Church at Coon Prairie.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church and Cemetery

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

FOOTNOTES

1. Incorporation Records, Book of Marriages, Vol. I, p. 36 (Viroqua, WI: Office of the Register of Deeds, Vernon County Court House).
2. Vernon (WI) County Censor 14 September 1910 and 19 October 1910; Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes (translated from the original Norwegian text by M. Bergum, Oct. 1985) 17 April 1922 and 17 July 1922 (Westby, WI: Minutes of the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church on Coon Prairie): Westby (WI) Times 17 May 1922.
3. Files (Receipt), Church Office (Westby, WI: Westby-Coon Prairie Lutheran Church).
4. Ibid.
5. Inscription on painting. Artist name possibly spelled Grunsten.
6. Fund drive for the organ began in 1921: Files, Church Office; Trustees Meeting Minutes, 17 January 1921, p. 310. Organ actually installed in 1928: Interview with Joel Borgen and Leif Harpestad, December 1985.
7. Ibid., 19 January 1920, p. 306; Westby Times, 25 May 1921.
8. Ibid., 17 May 1922; Trustees Meeting Minutes, 17 April 1922.
9. Files, Church Office; Westby Times 5 July 1918. The Oyen Decorating Company was established by a Norwegian immigrant, O.J. Oyen, in La Crosse in 1888. Employing immigrant craftsmen, Oyen contracted to decorate churches, commercial and residential as well as many court houses throughout the midwest until his death in 1926.
10. Westby Times 17 May 1922; Trustees Meeting Minutes, 17 April 1922 and 17 July 1922; Westby (WI) Witness, May 1958, August 1958, June 1959 (Westby, WI: Westby-Coon Prairie Lutheran Church).
11. Ibid., February 1965, August 1970.
12. Trustees Meeting Minutes 17 April 1922; Westby Witness, May 1971.
13. Ibid., August 1974.
14. Ibid., August 1947; Interview with Joel Borgen, October 1985.
15. Deed Records, Vol. 68, p. 301, (Viroqua, WI: Register of Deeds Office, Vernon County Court House).
16. Official Directory and Hand Book, 1924-25, Coon Prairie Norwegian Ev. Lutheran Church (Westby, WI: Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church), p. 1.
17. Trustees Meeting Minutes, 15 January 1912, p. 257.

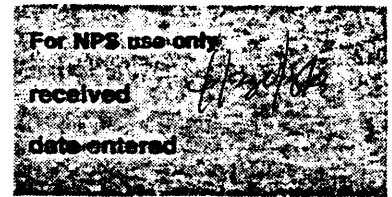
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church and Cemetery
Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 3



18. Ibid, 17 January 1916, p. 275 and 18 March 1918, p. 295. The Trustees gave the Halvorsens permission to cultivate five acres of unused church land located on the south end of the church property (property was re-incorporated as cemetery land at some unknown date): Trustees Meeting Minutes, 30 January 1919, p. 301 and 19 January 1920, p. 306.

19. Parish Report, Files, Church Office.

20. Ibid.; Westby Witness, October 1922; Westby Times 28 June 1922.

21. Report of election noted in: Trustees Meeting Minutes, 17 January 1910; Westby Times, 21 January 1921; Westby Witness, February 1950.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1909-1910¹ **Builder/Architect** Parkinson and Dockendorff²
 Theodore Thorson (Builder/Contractor)³

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church is an architecturally significant example of a church designed in the Gothic Revival style. One of four major examples of Gothic Revival church architecture constructed in the early decades of the 20th century in Vernon County, this twin towered red brick church trimmed in white stone and ornamented by pointed arch stained glass windows and by small buttresses is a simple expression of the style typical of the early 20th century. Built by a congregation of Norwegian immigrants and Norwegian descendents on the prairie site of their original church, this country church designed by the architectural firm of Parkinson and Dockendorff and the adjoining cemetery has been exceptionally well preserved.

ARCHITECTURE

The Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church on Coon Prairie is one of four substantial examples of Gothic Revival church architecture constructed in Vernon County in the early decades of the 20th century. Although constructed with less elaboration and smaller in size than its sister church in the village of Westby, the excellently preserved Country Church, as it is commonly called, and its adjacent cemetery picturesquely located on the prairie is more visually aesthetic and exhibits greater architectural integrity than its companion church in Westby. Used routinely as the principal church of the congregation the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church in Westby constructed of light iron brick on a corner lot on Main Street in 1909 was altered when the steeples were removed in 1949.⁴ The other major early 20th century representatives of church architecture built in the Gothic Revival style in Vernon County are Our Savior's Lutheran Church also on Main Street in Westby constructed in 1921, the Methodist Church on South Central Avenue, in Viroqua constructed in 1914,⁶ and the Congregational Church built in Hillsboro in 1909.⁷ These latter three churches exhibit definite English Tudor Gothic influences. Ornamented by buttresses and pointed arch stained glass windows, the white stone trimmed red brick Norwegian Lutheran Church on Coon Prairie flanked by twin towers and steeples exhibits the Gothic Revival style simplified in a manner characteristic of the early 20th century.⁸ Retention of the original interior furnishings of the church and the adjoining cemetery strengthens the significance of this building as an exceptionally well preserved illustration of the architectural taste of the day. The visual and emotional impact of this country church was noted on the occasion of its dedication, October 16, 1910, in the Vernon County Censor: "There is something grandly inspiring in a church reposing boldly upon the open prairie. And on this beautiful Sabbath day, with hundreds of people and teams clustering around its base, it was the more a thing to be revered. . . . we wandered in the solemn stillness, sat among the graves in the ancient cemetery where sleep the patriarchs and pioneers of old Vernon, viewed the ruins of the old church and wondered at the faith that had reared another in its stead in the short span of one year."⁹

9. Major Bibliographical References

Holand, Hjalmar. Coon Prairie, an Historical Report of the Norwegian Evangelic Congregation at Coon Prairie. Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1927; Reprint Ed., 1977.
 Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church Meeting Minutes. Westby: Westby-Coon Prairie Church, 1909-2
Vernon County (WI) Censor, 14 April 1909, 14 September 1910, and 19 October 1910.
Westby (WI) Times. 1917 - 1922; Westby (WI) Witness. 1922-1974.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 15 acres
 Quadrangle name Westby, Wisconsin Quadrangle scale 1:24000
 UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>	D	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>
E	<u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	F	<u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

Part of Northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section (4) Township (13) North of Range (4) west of the fourth principal meridian. See site map attached.

(see continuation sheet 10-1)

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

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joan M. Rausch / Architectural Historian
 organization Architectural Researches, In., date December 9, 1985
 street & number 2540 Sherwood Drive telephone (608) 788-5932
 city or town La Crosse state Wisconsin 54601

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

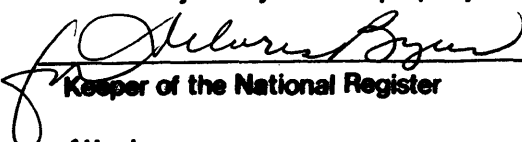
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 
 title _____ date APRIL 22, 1986

For NPS use only

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

and is listed in the National Register


 Keeper of the National Register

date 7-14-86

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church and Cemetery

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Designed by A. E. Parkinson of the La Crosse firm of Parkinson and Dockendorff and constructed by the Westby contracting firm of Theodore Thorson during the years 1909 to 1910, the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church on Coon Prairie was constructed after a fire on Easter Sunday destroyed the 1875 stone church previously located on the site. This Gothic Revival styled church is one of two churches constructed from the same basic design during the same year by this congregation because they could not agree on whether the new church should be built on the old historic site or on a new site in the village of Westby located two miles to the north. The village of Westby had grown around the station of the Chicago, Minneapolis, and St. Paul Railroad Company, which for political reasons located a station near the general store of Old Westby when the railway was constructed across the prairie of western Wisconsin in 1879. Under the direction of the "Coon Prairie" building committee, J. A. Moen, Gus Thiege, Rud Nustad, Henry Johnson and Henry Swenson, this Norwegian Lutheran Church was built at a cost of \$15,000.

The Norwegian Evangelic Church on Coon Prairie was used weekly for Sunday services until the 1930s when the church services were conducted twice a month. In the 1940s, the church was used for Sunday services approximately once a month. By the late 1940s at which time attendance had diminished to less than 50, regular services were discontinued. In 1952, no Christmas services were conducted in the church for the first time in the history of the church. The problem of the future use of this church was discussed by the congregation in 1958. As a result, a repair and maintenance program was instituted for the Country Church, but regular church services were not re-established. A schedule of Sunday services during the summer months began in the early 1970s and has continued for the most part to the present day. In recent times, the "Country Coon Prairie Church" has become a choice site for Norwegian cultural and religious events.

Credited with the design of over 800 public buildings, the firm of Albert E. Parkinson and Bernard J. Dockendorff of La Crosse specialized in church, school, hospital and commercial structures. Bernard Dockendorff, born in La Crosse in 1878, worked c. 1895-1897 with the local architectural firm of Schick and Stoltze. After studying at the Technicum in Darmstadt, Germany, for three years, Dockendorff returned to La Crosse c. 1905 where he formed a partnership with Albert Parkinson. A native of England, A. E. Parkinson was trained in the practice of architecture by his father and in the schools of Scranton. Licensed to practice in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, and Illinois, the Parkinson and Dockendorff offices located in the Linker Building provided practical training for many young architects of the area. The firm also designed the Romanesque Revival styled St. Wenscelaus Church at La Crosse, Wisconsin, in 1914. The association of Dockendorff and Parkinson ended with their deaths in 1952.

Historical Background

Incorporated formally as the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Congregation on Coon Prairie, Bad Ax County, on July 29, 1854, the congregation of this Norwegian Lutheran Church generally is believed to have been established when the first baptism was recorded in 1851. Arrangements for a parsonage was authorized by the congregation in October, 1853; however, the property originally composed of 80 acres (which included a small house) on which the present Norwegian Lutheran Church on Coon Prairie is located, was legally obtained by the Trustees of the church from Nels and Martha Hanson later on January 3, 1855. The site of the church, cemetery, and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church and Cemetery

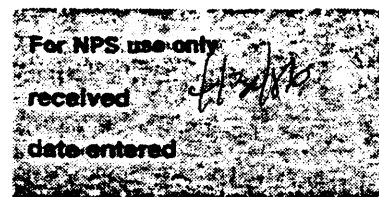
Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

2



parsonage farm, this half-quarter section of land remained the property of the church until the parsonage farm (65 acres) was sold to the Halvorsen family in 1918.²³ The church parsonage was moved to the village of Westby.²⁴

The remaining 15 acres, which encompasses the church and cemetery, continues to remain the property of the Westby-Coon Prairie Lutheran Congregation. Originally the site of a frame church built in 1857,²⁵ a large church constructed of native limestone with a towering steeple (added in 1891) was built next to the site of the frame church during the years 1875-1879 to accommodate the 1200 member congregation.²⁶ The present brick church built after the 1909 fire in the stone church is the third church to occupy essentially the same historic site.²⁷ The adjoining Coon Prairie Cemetery was dedicated when the infant daughter of the first pastor, H. A. Stub, was buried there September 11, 1855.²⁸

Closely associated with the wave of Norwegian immigration between the years 1850 to 1880, Coon Prairie as well as Timber Coulee, Coon Valley and adjacent areas in western Wisconsin were settled by a large number of Norwegian Lutherans. The Norwegians were first led to Coon Prairie in 1848 by Even Gullord of Biri, Norway, who came to Coon Prairie by way of Koskonnog. The site of the first settlement of Norwegians in America from Biri, Gudbrandsdal, Hurdal and Hekkefjord,²⁹ Norway, immigrants also came to Coon Prairie from South Land, Egersund and Upper Telemark. The majority of the early settlers came from Biri, many of whom were inspired by the encouraging letters written by Evan Gullord.³⁰

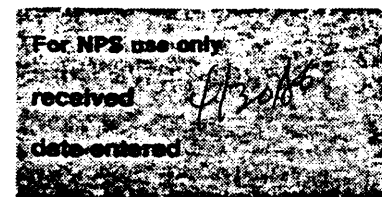
United by the Norwegian culture and by a common religion, the Norwegian immigrant farmers at Coon Prairie formed a Lutheran congregation within a few years of their arrival. Services by the mission pastor Nils Brandt were held in Even Gullord's barn not far from the present "Country Coon Prairie" Norwegian Church at least as early as 1851.³¹ Reportedly, the builders of the first church structure in Vernon County and of the first Norwegian Church in western Wisconsin, the Norwegians of Coon Prairie also built the first school house in the county, which was established as a public school conducted in the English language.³² Anxious to work cooperatively with other Norwegian Lutheran congregations, the congregation joined the recently formed Norwegian Synod in 1861.³³ Thus the Norwegian immigrants at Coon Prairie continued the church organization established on the religious heritage from Norway. During the year 1949, the historic name of the congregation was changed from the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church to the Westby-Coon Prairie Lutheran Church as a result of the movement of the church in general to appeal to all Lutherans in America.³⁴

Although gradually adapting to the larger American society, the Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Congregation of Coon Prairie and Westby continued for many years to protect their heritage and to cultivate the Norwegian language. Religious school held in addition to public school beginning very early in the history of the congregation was taught in Norwegian until the 1920s.³⁵ In 1919, an assistant pastor "skillful" in the English and Norwegian languages was called at the request of the congregation to attend to the needs of the young people in the parish.³⁶ About the same time, an outside pastor was asked to give English sermons twice a month.³⁷ By the early 1940s, half of the church services were still conducted in the Norwegian language, diminishing to once a month by the late 1940s.³⁸ Still very conscious of their Norwegian heritage, the congregation of the Westby-Coon Prairie Lutheran Church sponsors events such as Coon Prairie Heritage Day and Gudbrandsdals Lag that generally include church services in the Norwegian language.³⁹ Present efforts to preserve this rural Norwegian Lutheran Church built on the site associated with the establishment of their congregation began in 1984.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church and Cemetery



Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

4

17. Souvenir Brocheures: Gudbrandsdals Lag, Sept. 19-20, 1980; Coon Prairie Heritage Day, 12 August 1984; Norwegian Heritage Church Services, 25 August 1985.

18. La Crosse (WI) Morning Chronicle 2 September 1900; La Crosse (WI) Tribune 21 September 1952; WI Department of Regulation and Liscensing, Examining Board of Architects and Professional Engineers, Series 1591, Archives, State Historical Society of WI, Madison, WI.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Articles of Incorporation, Book of Marriages, Vol. I, p. 36. (Viroqua, WI: Office of the Register of Deeds, Vernon County Court House). A source discussing the problem of dating the founding of the congregation for the years, 1851, 1852, or 1853 is: Holand, Coon Prairie, pp. 62-71. Pastor Halvorsen believed the date of the founding to be July 12, 1852: Westby Witness, September 1946.

22. Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 66; Property Deed, Vol. 2, p. 11 (Viroqua, WI: Office of the Register of Deeds, Vernon County Court House).

23. Ibid., Vol 68, p. 301.

24. Signe Halvorsen Holum, "Chapter II" An account of life in the parsonage August 5, 1957, Office Files, Church Office.

25. Viroqua (WI) Western Times, 15 September 1858.

26. Holand, Coon Prairie, p. 108.

27. Vernon County Censor, 19 October 1910.

28. Official Directory & Hand Book, 1924-25, Coon Prairie Norwegian Ev. Lutheran Church (Westby, WI: Norwegian Evangelic Church), p. 1.

29. Holand, Coon Prairie, pp. 20-32.

30. Ibid., p. 22.

31. Ibid., p. 44.

32. Ibid., p. 81.

33. Ibid., p. 86.

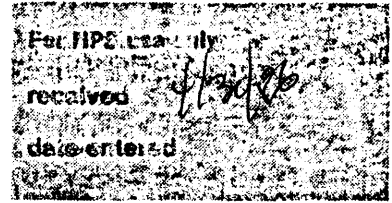
34. Ibid., February 1948.

35. Ibid., pp. 26 and 143-147; Joel Borgen, interview, October, 1985.

36. Trustees Meeting Minutes, 18 January 1915, p. 270; 18 March 1918, p. 294 and 20 January 1919, p. 300.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church and Cemetery
Continuation sheet Item number 8

Page 5

37. Ibid., 15 March 1915.

38. Westby Witness, February 1941 through March 1948.

39. Souvenir Brocheures: Gudbrandsdals Lag, 1980, Heritage Day, 1984, Heritage Church Services, 1985.

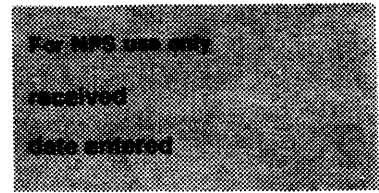
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

Norwegian Evangelic Lutheran Church

Continuation sheet Vernon County, Wisconsin Item number 10

Page 1



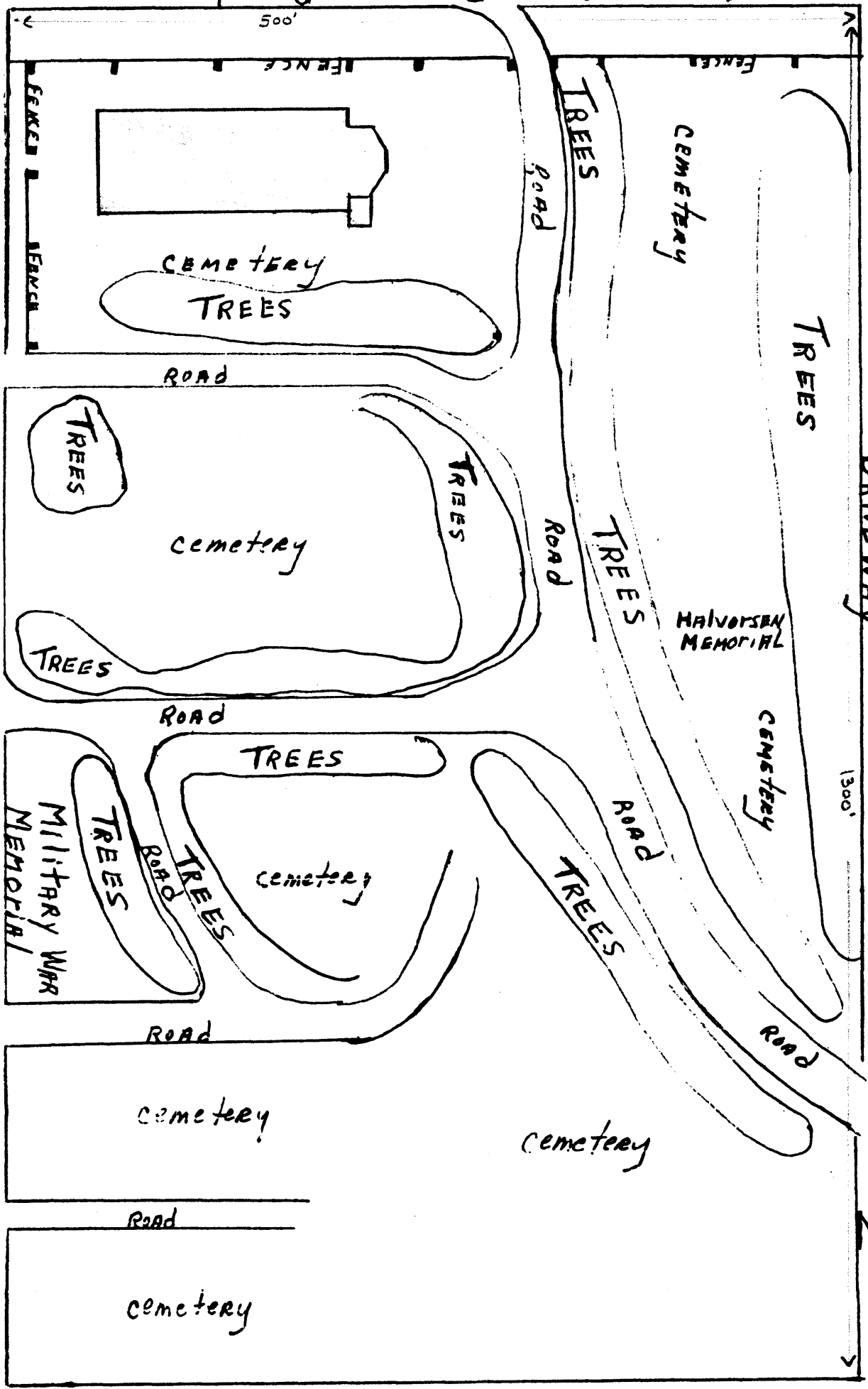
Verbal Boundary Description: continued

Starting from the SE curbline of the intersection of Coon Prairie Road and East Coon Prairie Road; then proceeding 500 feet East along the south curbline of East Coon Prairie Road to a driveway, then 1300 feet South along the ROW line of the driveway of the church property, then 500 feet West to the east curb line of Coon Prairie Road, then 1300 feet North to the point of beginning along the curbline of Coon Prairie Road; all completeing a rectangle surrounding the church proper and the adjacent cemetary grounds. Town of Viroqua, Vernon County, WI.

NORWEGIAN EVANGELIC LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CEMETERY
Site Plan (Approx. 15 acres)

COON PRAIRIE ROAD

EAST COON PRAIRIE ROAD



DRIVEWAY

1300'

North
↑

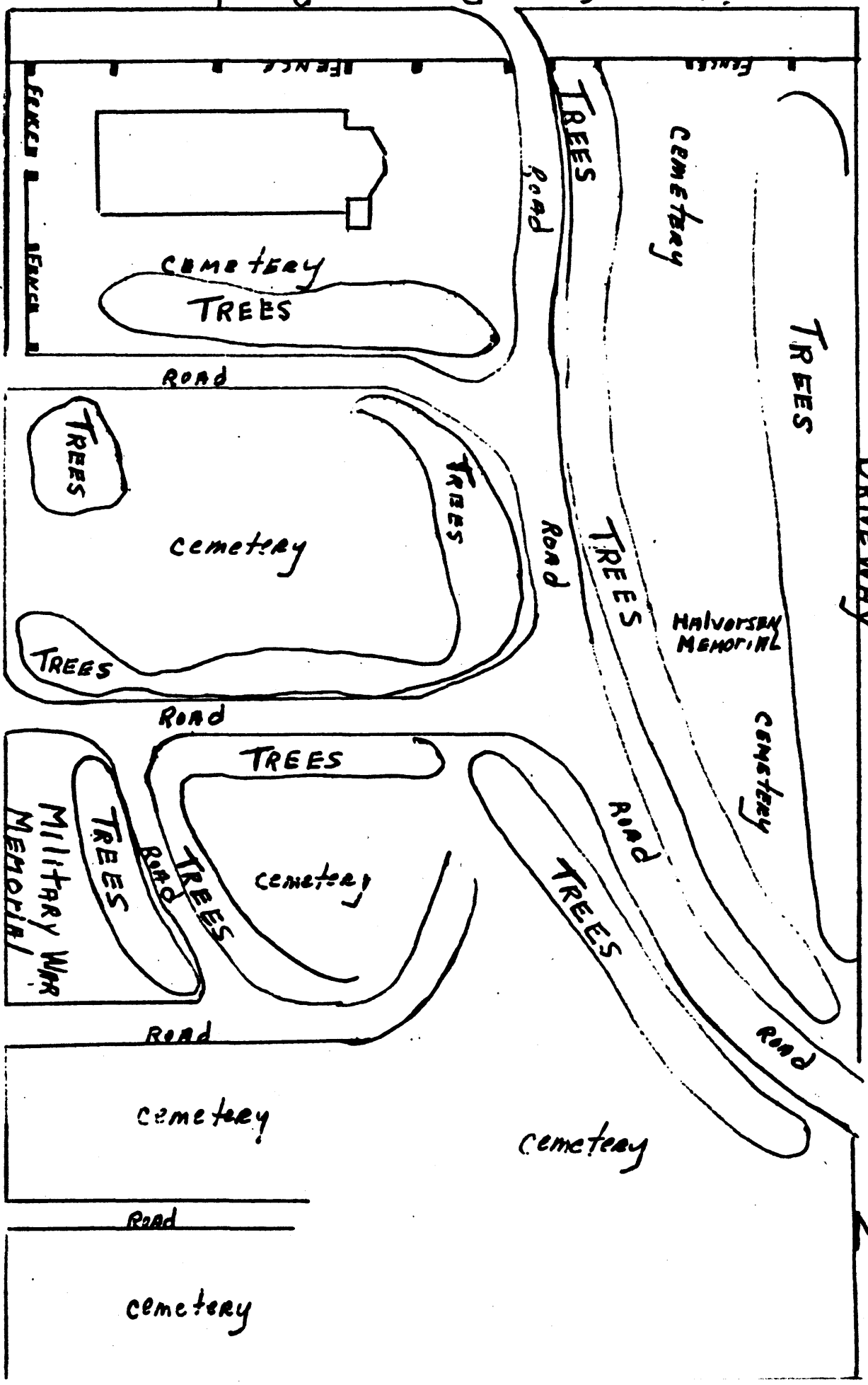
NORWEGIAN EVANGELIC LUTHERAN CHURCH AND CEMETERY

Site Plan (Approx. 15 acres)

Coon Prairie Road

East Coon Prairie Road

DRIVEWAY



North ↑