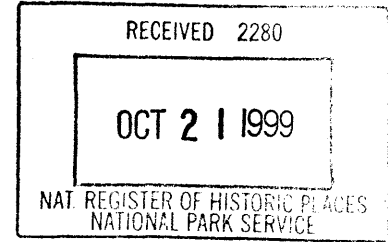


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1386



**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 Clearwater Evangelical Lutheran Church

other names/site number Clearwater Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church

**2. Location**

street & number off Co. Hwy. 10 not for publication  N/A   
city or town Equality Twp. Oklee vicinity  N/A   
state Minn., code MN county Red Lake code 125 zip code 56742

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.)

[Signature] Date 8/26/99  
Signature of certifying official Ian R Stewart  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

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 \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this 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): \_\_\_\_\_

*Elsa H. Ball*

11/18/99

*pot*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**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>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</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

## 6. Function or Use

---

### Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Vacant Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

---

## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Late Victorian/Gothic Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

_____	_____
_____	_____

---

### Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
roof	<u>Asphalt, Wood</u>
walls	<u>Wood</u>
other	_____
	_____
	_____

**Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more 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)**

Exploration/Settlement  
Ethnic Heritage/European

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1912-1949

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1912, 1923, 1930, 1938

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Nesland, Aslak (Builder)

Nesland, Oscar (Builder)

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

### 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 2.6

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>292690</u>	<u>5311870</u>	<u>315</u>	<u>292840</u>	<u>5311760</u>
2	<u>15</u>	<u>292840</u>	<u>5311860</u>	<u>415</u>	<u>292680</u>	<u>5311760</u>

- See continuation sheet.

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

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

Clearwater Evan. Lutheran Church, Red Lake County, MN

**11. Form Prepared By**

---

name/title David C. Anderson

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date May 15, 1999

street & number 169 Lundy Bridge Drive telephone (319) 382-3079

city or town Waukon state IA zip code 52172

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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)**

---

**Property Owner**

---

(This item must be completed.)

name Clearwater Norwegian Evangelical Congregation c/o Ragna Gunderson

street & number Box 149 telephone (218) 796-5712

city or town Oklee state MN zip code 56742

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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.

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Clearwater Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
Red Lake County, MN

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DESCRIPTION

The Clearwater Evangelical Lutheran Church is located in Equality Township of Red Lake County, Minnesota, nine miles northeast of Oklee and 12 miles east of Plummer, the closest cities. This is in the northwest region of Minnesota, a large expanse of territory formerly occupied by Glacial Lake Agassiz and including the Red River Valley and territory east along the Minnesota/Canada border to International Falls. Red Lake County is located within a zone of former Lake Agassiz shoreline known as Herman Beach, which has left poorly drained but fertile soil mixed with gravel. This region of the state has been called "some of the flattest terrain to be seen anywhere."<sup>1</sup> It is an area devoted to diversified farming which at the time of first settlement included woodland, prairie, and swampland.

The Clearwater Church occupies a one-acre parcel directly across County Hwy. 10 from the Clearwater Cemetery, which comprises 1.6 acres of land. The church parcel includes a non-contributing 6 by 12 foot privy located on the east line of the property.

The main body of the wood frame church was built in 1912 and measures 59 by 26 feet, comprising a 39 foot nave, a 15 foot long polygonal choir and a 5 by 10½ foot tower and entrance at the west end. A belfry and spire were put on in 1923 followed by the installation of a bell in 1925.<sup>2</sup>

In 1938 a raised, poured concrete basement was put under the church. This includes a meeting/dining hall, kitchen, and furnace room. Attempts to keep the basement dry by installing an automatic sump pump have not been successful and the linoleum tile-covered wood floor has been badly damaged by water, which is a constant hazard because of the high water table in this location. The basement walls include ten 1/1 double-hung windows distributed on three sides.

When the basement was put under the building, a "ministers room" (vestry) was added on the southeast corner, and this also provides an entrance to the basement as does an enclosed doorway and stairs next to the main entrance on the west end.

The church is clad in wood lap siding (clapboards) with beaded corner boards, enclosed eaves, and a boxed cornice with returns. The four triangular walls of the belfry are clad with wood pattern shingles, and the polygonal spire has wood shingles. The transition from lower tower to belfry is made with a pent roof, and this is clad with asphalt shingles as are the remaining roof surfaces on the building.

All windows into the nave and choir and a single window over the main entrance are stained glass. The nave and choir were installed in the 1960s and 1970s, and they register memorials to some of the founding members of the congregation. These are in pointed arch frames above rectangular units, and they replaced double-hung sash with clear lights in a tripartite lancet pattern over a double-glazed lower sash. Since the new windows are in the original frames, they impact the exterior less than the interior of the church. Historic photos also show that originally there was a tripartite semicircular window over the entrance which was replaced with a stained glass insert including the church name, but this was damaged by wind and replaced by a plywood panel with the church name in metal letters.

Concrete stairs (1938) lead up to steel double doors (1993) that open into a narrow vestibule. From here, stairs lead to the basement on one side and to the gallery and bell tower on the other. Bell ropes are still in place, coming through the vestibule ceiling. Double wood doors lead into the nave, where none of the original fabric is extant

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(wall, ceiling, or floor coverings). In 1949 the interior was covered with celotex tile in a brown, tan, and white color scheme. The gallery was closed in at this time. Varnished pine pews made by a firm in Willmar (c. 1950) replaced earlier ones made by a local parishioner in 1930 which in turn replaced seats made in 1914 from lumber left over from the church construction. The floor is carpeted throughout.

A wood altar framing an oil painting, "Christ the Good Shepherd," was purchased in 1931. The pulpit and altar ring date from 1915, and all this furniture was painted the current color scheme (white with gold highlights) in c. 1930.<sup>3</sup>

The original brick chimney is still in place beneath the celotex tile on the north side of the nave (east end), and a new chimney stands on the south side.

Although the Clearwater Church interior, including windows, has been extensively modified over the years since initial construction, the altar, altar ring, and pulpit are significant elements that demonstrate historic integrity. The church exterior possesses good integrity, and the building is in good overall condition except for the basement floor and a persistent leak in the belfry.

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<sup>1</sup>Ojakangas and Matsch, Chapter 11, "Northwestern Minnesota." Quotation is on p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>All information on the church construction and its modifications up to 1950 is from Ida Lillo (Mrs. Nels) Fore's 1951 history of the Clearwater congregation, reprinted in Lillo, pp. 10-35. This was based on church records that are no longer extant. More recent changes to the church were described in conversations with the author by Neil Lillo on 1-24-99 and Ragna Gunderson on 1-25-99.

<sup>3</sup>Mrs. Fore's history is somewhat confusing here, but the altar painting was done in 1931 by Thomas Waale of Thief River Falls, MN. The altar ring (1915), pulpit (1938) and presumably the altar (1930) were made by the Northern Woodwork Co., also of Thief River Falls.



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SIGNIFICANCE

The Clearwater Evangelical Lutheran Church of Red Lake County, Minnesota is eligible for listing on the NRHP under Criterion A as a property associated with significant events in the areas of early settlement and European ethnic heritage. The history of the Clearwater congregation reflects important patterns of Norwegian-American emigration to Minnesota, and the church is one of the few extant properties with historic integrity built by the Norwegian-Americans who first settled this part of Minnesota. It also represents an effort to maintain an ethnic heritage through language retention, worship, education, and a variety of church-sponsored social activities. This property also relates to the Minnesota statewide context, "Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940."

The part of Red Lake County that includes Equality Township was opened for Euro-American settlement in 1896 following a land cession by the Red Lake Chippewa (Ojibwe) in 1889 via the Nelson Act of that year. This was a large piece of territory that extends to Lake of the Woods County on the Minnesota border with Canada. This cession represents the last major dispossession of Native Americans by the U. S. Government in Minnesota, even though a large portion of this tract was later (1892, 1934) restored to the Red Lake Chippewa and represents approximately the Red Lake Reservation of today.<sup>1</sup>

Included in the 1889 agreement were the northeast one-half of the future Red Lake and Pennington Counties, while the southwest portion of Red Lake County had been part of the land ceded by the same Native Americans in 1863 via the Old Crossing Treaty. The present borders of Red Lake County were established in 1910 when Pennington County was created out of approximately the northern one-half of the Red Lake County of that time, which had been expanded when an area north of the Clearwater River was opened for settlement in 1904.

The Old Crossing was near Red Lake Falls, now the county seat of Red Lake County, and the cession bearing its name included much of northwest Minnesota, including approximately the northern half of the Red River Valley. This area, in addition to adjacent parts of North Dakota and Canada, had been a location of fur trading activities since at least the early 18<sup>th</sup> century on the part of both Britain and France. Although Canada came under British control in 1763, French Canadians maintained a presence in northwest Minnesota into the early settlement period.

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, connections established by French Canadian traders with Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi River in southwest Wisconsin led to traffic through Ft. Snelling, built in 1819. An ambitious project by the British (Scots) Lord Selkirk to establish agricultural colonies in the Red River Valley between Winnipeg and the Dakota border in 1812, along with the setting up of a trading post by the American Fur Co. in 1829, led to the development of regular traffic via ox-carts between St. Paul and the state's northwest region and adjacent areas in Canada and Dakota Territory. This was mainly commercial traffic consisting of furs and buffalo hides to St. Paul and supplies for a growing population of traders and military personnel to the north. The ox-cart trains were the most important means of transportation into northwest Minnesota until railroads penetrated the region, and one of the ox-cart trails went through what was to become Red Lake County on the way to Pembina, Dakota Territory, located on the Minnesota-Canada-Dakota border.

Railroads entered the region beginning in 1871 when the Northern Pacific reached Moorhead, across the Red River from Fargo, Dakota Territory. Shortly thereafter, the St. Paul and Pacific arrived in Crookston and East Grant Forks. This new, improved means of travel led to a land rush into the Red River Valley lands in Minnesota, Dakota Territory and Canada. The rich alluvial soils created by the slow-moving and meandering Red River and the tall grass

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prairie of these lands made this region highly desirable for agriculturist land seekers, and led to the famous "bonanza farms," rapid population increases via immigration, and the rapid taking up of available land in the Valley itself.

The southwest portion of Red Lake County was first settled by French-Canadians, after Red Lake Falls was established by Pierre Bottineau in 1876. The townships south and east of the city (now the county seat) bear French names, attesting to their presence there, as do population figures.<sup>2</sup>

That portion of Red Lake County opened in 1896 (Equality and one-half of Garnes Townships) and in 1904 (partial townships north of the Clearwater River and what became Pennington County) were less desirable than the Valley lands, offering a mixture of poorly drained timber- and swamplands with occasional prairie on rocky soil. It was not without appeal, however, since while the timber would have to be cleared, it could be sold, and the settlers also found work in lumber camps to the north and during harvest on the bonanza farms in the Valley. It was also available for Homestead claims which required only residence and "improvements" to be granted title.

Until 1904, the closest rail connection had been Crookston. The Village of Plummer was laid out when the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Sainte Marie (Soo Line) Railway came through, and then in 1910 the first train came to Oklee, which had been established in anticipation of its arrival. Nevertheless, when Equality Township was opened to settlers in the spring of 1896,

There were many looking for land, so all of the better land was taken the first year and by the time 1897 and 1898 had passed there was a homesteader on almost every quarter section in the township.<sup>3</sup>

And then in 1904 there was a further movement of settlers into what became Pennington County under what appear to be land rush conditions. Population figures are difficult to determine for certain geographic units because the borders between counties were changing rapidly.<sup>4</sup>

Our major concern, however, is with Equality and the northeast one-half of Garnes (Gjernes) Townships where the population became almost entirely Norwegian after 1896. There were Norwegians elsewhere in Red Lake County by that time but in scattered locations in relatively low numbers. They also settled in Pennington County in large numbers and at locations in other counties of northwest Minnesota east of the Red River Valley.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Norwegian-American Settlement in Red Lake County**

To be sure, Norwegians came to all agricultural areas of the state beginning in the 1850s, and in a national context, between 1825 and 1928, more came to Minnesota than to any other state.<sup>6</sup> People with Norwegian ancestors still represent a large proportion of the population in Minnesota.

The period of the largest emigration from Norway began in the mid-1860s and continued into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the highest number leaving in 1882 (29,000). Other than Ireland, no other European country lost such a high proportion of its population to emigration. The emigrants were mostly farm dwellers who had become superfluous in Norway due to a rising birth rate and farm consolidation, among other things. They saw that the only way to preserve their rural way of life was to emigrate. However, the Red River Valley was not known to prospective Norwegian-American settlers until 1869, when the State of Minnesota, through its Bureau of Immigration, hired a Norwegian journalist to travel there and send his (positive) reports to publications in Norway as well as to Norwegian-

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American newspapers.<sup>7</sup> And also to take advantage of the social crisis in Norway, the Northern Pacific set up a "Land and Immigration" department and sent recruitment agents to Norway.

The settlement patterns of the Norwegians who had come to Minnesota beginning in the 1850s, and subsequent migrations from Norway and by the offspring of the first arrivals, were also a factor in the large numbers who moved to the Red River Valley and subsequently into Red Lake and Pennington Counties. A three-stage chain migration describes their practice in settling rural areas, and we find that movement was mostly in family units, not only from Norway but from established settlements in the U. S. to newly opened lands as they became available. The first stage would be the immigration of families to a newly opened settlement area, e.g. southeast Minnesota in the early 1850s. These families would attract subsequent migration, often by related people or those from the same parish in Norway. The original zone of settlement would soon become overcrowded and, as new territory became available, the latest settlers would move on and, after getting established, attract additional people directly from Norway, thus completing the cycle.<sup>8</sup> This explains why people with ancestral roots in the same places in Norway can be found together in particular Minnesota townships, belonging to particular Lutheran congregations here.

The first settlers who moved to occupy the newly opened lands of Red Lake County were either born in Norway or had parents born there, and their movements followed the pattern just described. Census reports for Equality Township show that in 1905 the population was 87% Norwegian (610 of 700 total) with most heads of household being born in Norway or in Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin or North Dakota where settlement had begun earlier. By 1910 the numbers fell off to a total of 503 but with the same proportion of Norwegians, indicating that a number of them had moved on, either north in Minnesota, or west as the frontier moved toward Washington.<sup>9</sup>

Within two years of the opening of the territory for settlement, the Clearwater congregation was organized (Feb. 21, 1898) with 30 charter members. Until their church was built in 1912, they met for worship in members' homes and later in two of the township's public schools. The cemetery parcel was obtained by 1900 when the first burials were made.<sup>10</sup>

The Norwegian Lutheran church building of the type represented by the Clearwater edifice has come to stand for Norwegian-American immigration to several rural Midwestern states, but perhaps most especially now North Dakota and parts of Minnesota. This is true even though the proportion of the Norwegian immigrants who settled in these areas that actually belonged to a Lutheran church is hard to determine.<sup>11</sup>

Gjerde and Qualey write:

Once built, the church quickly became the heart of the community . . . so that if one did not come to worship God one might come for other purposes, such as trading horses . . . or hearing the latest news.

and

(T)he most visible manifestation of the bridges between the Norwegian and Norwegian-American cultures . . . in Norwegian America as a whole was the Lutheran church. Still dotting the rural Minnesota landscape, these white spires once marked the undisputed social and religious centers of the rural communities.<sup>12</sup>

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This is especially so now in many locations where there are virtually no other landmarks or properties associated with the period of early settlement extant.

Whereas in Norway a single official Lutheran church was dominant, when they arrived in the U. S. the immigrants were able to split off into a myriad of synods, which was itself uniquely Norwegian, distinguishing them in particular from other Scandinavian-American groups.<sup>13</sup>

Over time there were 14 separate synods, and in 1915 there were three synods and 13 congregations in Red Lake County. Clearwater belonged to the Norwegian Synod, as it was called, but Salem Lutheran in Garnes Township, the only other rural church in the two townships, belonged to the United Norwegian Lutheran synod.

Nevertheless, Norwegian-American Lutherans representing the various synods shared many expressions of cultural identity. For example, their church buildings in rural areas from about 1870 to 1912 were predominantly a vernacular wood frame neo-Gothic type, of which Clearwater is a good example. Typically these were built by local carpenters with assistance from congregation members. Although plans were available from sources like the Augsburg Publishing House in Minneapolis, no two churches were built exactly alike, and the type was also used by other Protestant denominations. Clearwater's wooden altar painted white and gold framing an oil painting is also typical for Norwegian-American immigrant churches of the 1870-1910 period.<sup>14</sup>

As with other immigrant groups, preservation of social values and cultural heritage was achieved in worship and via church-sponsored social activities. And even though public schools were established in their midst and supported by them, it was typical for the Norwegians to set up parochial schools, which usually were operated as a supplement to the public ones. Norwegian was used in these schools, and religion was the primary subject matter, although secular subjects were sometimes included.<sup>15</sup> Clearwater set up a parochial school in 1898 and it continued for years, usually meeting for four to six weeks in the summer when the public schools were in recess.

Were it not for the public schools, there would have been little incentive for the early settlers in homogeneous ethnic regions to learn English. As time went on and the children learned English, it became increasingly difficult to maintain Norwegian as the only language of discourse either at home, in church, or elsewhere. In Minnesota, the period of the First World War marked a turning point in the language issue for all European-American immigrants. One indication of this was a law passed in 1919 by the State Legislature requiring the use of English in all public schools and in private schools serving in lieu of public ones. However, part-time religious schools, where a foreign language was used for the instruction of religion or where language was treated as a "handmaiden of religion," were not directly affected, which both illustrated and continued the intimate relationship between language and religion in immigrant communities.<sup>16</sup>

However, in 1925 English exceeded Norwegian in Lutheran churches for the first time, though in rural parishes this shift took longer. At Clearwater, it was in 1944

when the Norwegian language was discontinued entirely as the English language had come to be used almost exclusively among the younger generation in the homes.<sup>17</sup>

Norwegian had been used exclusively in the parochial school until 1920, when both Norwegian and English were used. Norwegian remained in use for church services until 1940, when both English and Norwegian services were given.

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At times and in places where local travel was most reliably undertaken on foot, it is not hard to imagine that church-sponsored gatherings of whatever kind helped serve the social needs of people living on isolated farmsteads, and extant documentation from the Clearwater community supports this contention.<sup>18</sup> Before the church itself was built, and even later, a variety of gatherings were held at the homes of members. It was only after the basement was completed in 1938 that the church was properly equipped for these events. Noteworthy in addition to Ladies' Aid and the Young People's Society events, parochial school sessions, weddings and funerals, there were *lutefisk* (a Norwegian specialty) suppers held between Christmas and New Year's and an annual summer festival (picnic). These "doings" almost always included fund raising in one way or another. The summer and winter gatherings typically included a church service, guest speaker, recitations, and/or music performances by children, as well as the sale of homemade craft and food items.

Other venues for social interaction in Equality Township were two post offices which included small general stores that were set up early on after settlement began (Grit and Lillo). By 1911 there were five public schools in the township and in 1904, when the territory north of Clearwater River was opened for settlement, a bridge was built and a store established there. This later grew to hamlet size and included a creamery and dance hall. Known as Roland, after the Norwegian-American Rolandsons who owned the store at one time, the hamlet was located just over a mile north of the Clearwater Church. It is no longer extant, and in 1998 the road was rerouted and a new bridge installed, so that the site is now off the main road and easily overlooked.

Mission activity and especially "home missions" had top priority in Norwegian-Lutheran churches after 1890, and the fund raising mentioned above contributed to these efforts. The home missions' job was to help establish and support new congregations as immigration continued, and the Clearwater congregation was the recipient of such mission aid. Foreign missionary activity was also important, and this can be seen in the Clearwater Church history. The foreign missions operated at several locations in the "undeveloped" world, e.g. in Africa. The American frontier was regarded as no less in need of the civilizing influence of Lutheran doctrine, and even though the Norwegian Lutherans in rural areas tended to isolate themselves from the larger social context in order to more fully realize their own particular identity in a context of freedom from old world constraints, they saw it as their sacred duty to bring their version of Christ to wherever it was unknown, whether Africa, the western Dakotas, or Red Lake and Pennington Counties. As one scholar put it:

In the Old World a person was likely to lead a respectable life because of the restraints of family and tradition. But in the New World these restraints were gone. No one knew him; life was harder; and the former pleasures were not available. Moral standards had been an outward prop, not an inner support, and now the prop was gone.<sup>19</sup>

Norwegian emigration to Minnesota continued into the 1920s but at a diminishing pace and with larger numbers going to the large urban centers of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth. After 1917, when the three largest Norwegian synods merged to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, many of the pioneering efforts of the church in keeping the heritage alive had begun to shift to secular groups. In 1946, the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America changed its name to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is not strictly Norwegian in membership. By this time the Sons of Norway, the Norwegian-American Historical Association, and the *Bygdelag* groups – associations of Norwegian-Americans who can trace their origins to specific districts (*Bygdelaget*) in Norway – had become more important, as, for example, the *Setesdal Bygdelag* with a chapter in Red Lake County.

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SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Clearwater Church was closed in 1987 although the congregation persists and the cemetery continues to be used. With the demise of Roland and the destruction by fire in 1936 of the original Salem Lutheran Church in neighboring Garnes Township, the Clearwater church is significant as the sole remnant with historic integrity of the relatively recent days of early settlement by Norwegian-Americans of eastern Red Lake County. This property was the location of not only worship, baptism, marriage and burial rites, but also a variety of general social activities which were occasions for maintaining spoken Norwegian, raising money to support this and other immigrant congregations, and simply to reaffirm one's identity as Norwegian. All of this took place in a location only recently occupied by a native people who had lived there for centuries, but which was also part of a nation-state whose dominant language and customs were incomprehensible. This property represents the settlement of one of the last frontiers in Minnesota by a European people who had been pioneers since the first days of Euro-American settlement in the state, and its landmark status also derives from its visibility for miles in a landscape notable now for a lack of vertical elements of any kind.

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<sup>1</sup>The 1889 cession is discussed in Folwell, Vol. IV, pp. 296-300. See also Rosenblatt, pp. 30, 267.

<sup>2</sup>Rubenstein, pp. 38-42.

<sup>3</sup>*A History of Red Lake County* (1976), p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>*ibid.*, p. 14. Population numbers are derived from both State and Federal census tallies. Until 1896, Red Lake was part of Polk Co. Red Lake Co.: 12,195 (1900), 6,472 (1905), 6,564 (1910), 7,263 (1920). The first census was taken in Pennington Co. in 1910, and the population at that time was 9,376, rising to 12,091 in 1920.

<sup>5</sup>Qualey, pp. 127-128. Norwegians also settled in Marshall and Kittson Counties on the Red River and in Roseau and Beltrami Counties north and east of Red Lake and Pennington Counties.

<sup>6</sup>Qualey and Gjerde, p. 220.

<sup>7</sup>*ibid.*, p. 228. Drache, p. 26. See also Semmingsen and Qualey.

<sup>8</sup>Qualey and Gjerde, p. 222.

<sup>9</sup>1905 Minnesota State Census – Equality Township, and 1910 (13<sup>th</sup>) U. S. Census – Equality Township. Family histories in the Red Lake County History relate individual instances of these migration patterns.

<sup>10</sup>Basic information on the Clearwater congregation is in Norlie, Volume I, p. 572 and p. 792. The other source for details on the congregation history is the 1951 account written by Mrs. Fore and reprinted in Lillo.

<sup>11</sup>No general and reliable figures have been found in the literature. In Equality township, however, a comparison of population figures for Norwegian-Americans with Norlie's figures on membership (30 "souls" in 1898 and the

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same in 1915) suggest perhaps 10-15% of the township Norwegians belonging to the Clearwater church, but this does not account for the Salem congregation in neighboring Garnes Township which had a membership of 200 in 1915, and some of them probably lived in Equality Township.

<sup>12</sup>Qualey and Gjerde, pp. 227, 224.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., pp. 234-235. Blegen, p. 171-173.

<sup>14</sup>Anderson, p. 208.

<sup>15</sup>Fevold, p. 14. Blegen, pp. 247-248.

<sup>16</sup>Chrislock, p. 125. The language issue among Norwegians is also discussed in Nelson, pp. 242-251.

<sup>17</sup>Lillo, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup>The 1951 history is the basic source for details on the congregation's social activities. These events were also mentioned by Ragna Gunderson in a conversation with the author on 1-30-99.

<sup>19</sup>Quotation from Hansen, pp. 103-104. Mission activities on the part of individual congregations is included in Norlie's compendium.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Clearwater Church and Cemetery lie on opposite sides (east and west) of County Hwy. 10, which is on the line dividing Sections Three and Four in Equality Township of Red Lake County. The legal description of the cemetery is as follows: Commencing at the northeast corner of the southeast quarter, Section Four, Equality Township, thence running 16 rods west, thence 16 rods south, thence 16 rods east, thence 16 rods north to the starting point, containing 1.6 acres.

The legal description of the church parcel is as follows: Commencing at the northwest corner of the southwest quarter, Section Three of Equality Township, running south on the section line 10 rods, thence east 16 rods, thence north 10 rods, thence west 16 rods to the place of beginning, containing one acre.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These parcels have historically been associated with the Clearwater Evangelical Lutheran Church and Cemetery.