

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Village of St. Donatus, Iowa Historic District  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number \_\_\_\_\_  not for publication  
city, town St. Donatus  vicinity  
state Iowa code IA county Jackson code 097 zip code 52031

### 3. Classification

<b>Ownership of Property</b>	<b>Category of Property</b>	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<b>Contributing</b>	<b>Noncontributing</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>33</u>	<u>19</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>33</u>	<u>19</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 2

### 4. 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.  See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 9/23/89  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Bureau of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Patrick W. Andrus 11/8/89  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture / Subsistence

Domestic

Commerce / Trade

Religion

Funerary

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture / Subsistence

Domestic

Commerce / Trade

Religion

Funerary

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other / Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

walls Limestone

Wood

roof Other / Composition

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**THE VILLAGE OF ST. DONATUS, IOWA**

The village of St. Donatus was once described as "one of the quaintest settlements . . . a little French island in the American sea." (Given, p. 1) Its Luxembourg heritage -- though commonly, and mistakenly, identified as French -- is as apparent now as it was when Welker Given published those words in 1922. The massive vernacular stone structures of St. Donatus' early residents, with their light colored stucco coatings and distinctive roof lines, dominate the landscape. The Tete des Morts and Lux Creeks, both tributaries of the Mississippi River, which is just four miles away, meander through the village. The surrounding limestone bluffs and the gentle rolling hills of the Tete des Morts valley provide a picturesque backdrop for this unique mid-19th century Luxembourg settlement.

The initial growth of the community occurred between 1850 and 1910 after which building activity came to a virtual standstill. Little physical development occurred until the early 1960s when a number of ranch-style homes were erected to accommodate the needs of area commuters. Much of this later development occurred on the southern limits of the village, outside the boundaries of the district. A few modern homes are scattered throughout the district yet do not detract from the historical character of the village.

Platted in 1860, St. Donatus can be divided into three distinct sections: The village proper, the West Village and the church complex. ( Fig. 1. ) The village proper, as it will be referred to throughout this discussion, is located at the intersection of the Dubuque to Bellevue Road (U.S. 52) and Gear's Ferry Road. It is here where much of the commercial development in the settlement occurred. (It remains the commercial hub of the village today.) The

**XX See continuation sheet**

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture  
Ethnic Heritage / European  
Social History

1854 - 1910

Cultural Affiliation

European / Luxembourg

Significant Person

Father Michael Flammang

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The village of St. Donatus offers the only surviving collection of mid-19th Century Southern or Lowland Luxembourg vernacular stone architecture in the United States of America. The village, one of several minor settlement areas in the United States, functioned as the mother colony for Luxembourgian settlement in the Midwest and, as such, exemplified the traditional agricultural village. The physical and cultural dominance of the Catholic parish, evident throughout the village's development, mirrored the traditional religious imprint of Luxembourg on the cultural landscape.

Luxembourg Immigration to the United States:

Economic unrest and political upheaval in Luxembourg in the 1820s and 1830s resulted in the beginnings of what would become a pattern of out-migration to the United States. By 1850 the quality of life in the home country had become unbearable. The excessive partitioning of land, poor harvests, uncertain economic conditions and over population created ample reasons for emigration. Though reports vary, an estimated 10,700 people emigrated from Luxembourg between 1831 and 1860. By 1890, over thirty thousand had left the country. (Gonner, p. 96)

These early immigrants, attracted by the availability of inexpensive farmland in the Midwest, were drawn to Ohio, northern Illinois, southern Wisconsin and eastern Iowa. Those settling in Western Illinois and Iowa arrived in New Orleans from Antwerp, Belgium and sailed up the Mississippi River to Galena, Illinois and Dubuque, Iowa. Others arrived in New York City, having departed from Le Havre,

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West Village -- or French Village as it is sometimes known -- is located roughly 400 yards west of the village proper. (Gear's Ferry Road originally ran through the center of the West Village. The road was later rerouted just south of this section of St. Donatus.) The church complex is located approximately 500 yards east of the village proper on East First Street. There is some indication that these roads may have been "planked" at one time. The Parish Chronicle notes the construction of a plank road from the church to St. Mary's Academy in 1869. Whether the "improved road" extended beyond the church grounds is unknown.

The structures located in the West Village were situated on narrow lots of 30' x 40' and 50' x 100' in size. Lots were sold in groups of two -- one lot was for the house, the other for the family garden. (Rogers, p.106) The lots located within the village proper were larger, more rectangular in shape and ranged from 75' x 75' to 225' x 300' in size.

The primary facades of buildings are oriented towards the roadways with the ridge lines of the roofs running parallel to the street. Out buildings are generally located to the rear of the lots. The buildings themselves are evenly spaced and somewhat closer to one another than would be expected given the wide open spaces initially available for development. This is particularly true in the West Village.

Neat little yards with white-washed picket fences were common. Early photographs indicate that a variety of shade and ornamental fruit trees were planted throughout the village. (Apparently many of the native trees had been removed during the initial settlement of the village.) The Parish Chronicle notes the purchase of poplar trees in 1866 from nearby Trappist monks. Apple trees, ornamental plants and shade trees were acquired in 1871. They were replaced the following year as an uncommonly dry summer killed many of the young trees. The stand of pines and firs on Calvary Mound was planted between 1887 and 1899 by Reverend Rottler.

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Several of the stone and frame buildings erected prior to 1900 have been demolished. An example would be the impressive St. Mary's Academy, located on the western perimeter of the church complex, which was razed in 1969. At least two, possibly three, stone dwellings in the village proper and the West Village fell to ruins or were destroyed by fire. The foundations of several of these building were reused, with newer structures erected over the surviving stone walls (Sites 8 and 14). Despite these losses and the village's recent housing development, the Luxembourg heritage of St. Donatus remains virtually intact.

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

#### Luxembourg Building Traditions:

Eighteenth and nineteenth century Southern and Lowland Luxembourg vernacular architecture is best characterized by the field stone and cut stone from which the buildings were constructed. This use of limestone stone, evident in numerous examples of German and Cornish architecture, is not unique to Luxembourg. What is unique however, is the treatment of the exterior of the building. Stone and occasionally log and frame structures, were coated in stucco and mortar in a variety of earth tones -- generally light yellow/brown and grey. Not only the homes but walls of all kinds, barns, spring houses, bake houses, smoke houses and wash houses were constructed of stone.

The floor plan of the main buildings could be characterized as "horizontally stretched rectangles" with the length of the buildings being generally two to three times their width. (Schmithusen, p. 249) A single basic form, that of a combined house and barn (Quereinheitshaus), with house, stable and barn lying under one roof, typified rural Luxembourg architecture.

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The buildings were one and a half or two stories in height. Above the second floor or "Speicher", there was usually an attic or "ieweschte Speicher" where grain and fruit were stored. Ceilings were made of broad planks or narrow oak lathes wrapped in a straw and clay mixture and called "Gewekels". (Bosseller, p.180) Laid side by side between and at right angles to the joists on the underside of the floor, they created a dry, reinforced floor/ceiling insulation. These "Gewekels" also served to create a rodent-proof flooring, suitable for the storage of grain overhead. (Conzen, p. 5) Floors were constructed of "Estrich", a mixture of small stones and lime, or of large stone and slate slabs. (Bosseller, p.180)

Half hip or jerkin roofs were common. The pitch of the roof varied although those found in the Moselle region were flatter than most. The framework rested on purlins along the stonework of the gable wall. There was no ridgepole. ( Fig. 2. ) Black slate and, prior to the adoption of fire codes in 1845, thatching materials were used to cover the roofs. (Bosseler, p.180) Red, half cylindrical tiles were used on occasion. The roof met the wall with little or no overhang. Gutters, when present, were incorporated into the roof.

Symmetrically arranged windows and doors were usually rectangular in shape though round arches were found in attic windows and above the doors of some barns and stables. Doors and windows, barely set back in their openings, were generally framed with stone beams. However, in some villages the windows were not framed and sat directly on the stone walls. ( Fig. 3. ) Windows that appear recessed are present only where frequent replastering of the exterior has occurred (Conzen, p. 3) The main entrance was placed squarely in the center of the eaves-side of the building. Windows were spaced evenly along the exterior of the structure with the upper windows sitting directly above those on the lower floors. Small rectangular windows in the attic or second floor, directly under the roof line, could be found. The occasional dormer window was present in buildings of one and one half stories. Wooden shutters or iron grill work covered the windows.

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Fig. 2. Interior view of Kass Barn. St. Donatus, Iowa ( Site 44b )  
Note lack of Ridge Pole at roof peak

These stone structures were distinguished less by decoration than by their well-proportioned mass and vertical planes. Any ornamentation that adorned the buildings was to be found in the carved wooded doors and in the frames which surrounded them. The lintel or keystone over the door often bore the date of the construction of the building and the initials of its builder. A sunburst motif, carved in elaborate detail, was a favorite on entrance doors. ( Fig. 4. )

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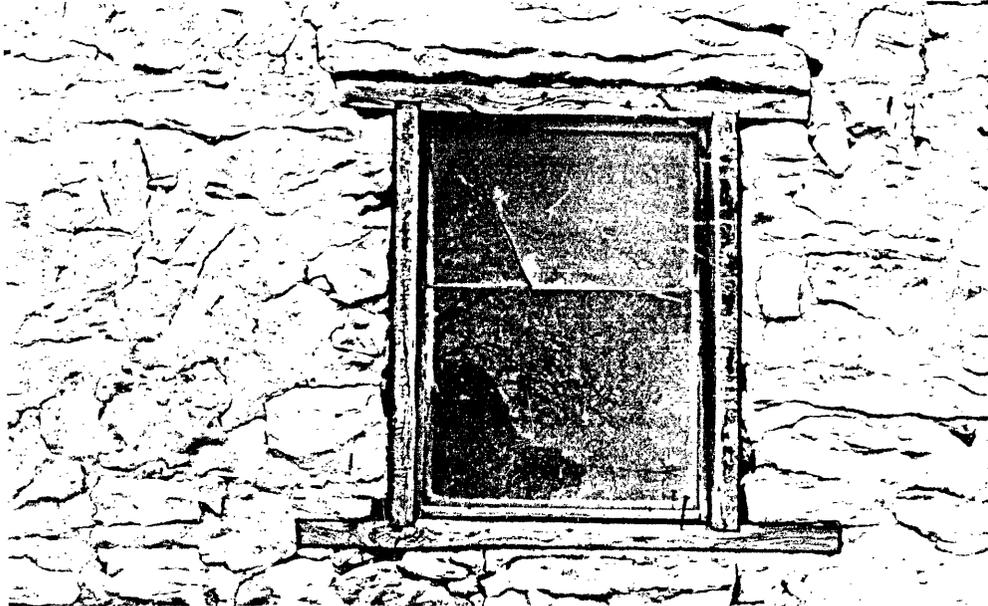


Fig. 3. Detail of Window. Kass Barn. St. Donatus, Iowa ( Site 44b )

The position of the houses in relationship to one another varied from village to village. The irregular scattering of houses or blocks of houses was evident in older villages with the ridge lines of the roofs running in various directions. In later settlements, the buildings stood close to one another and were positioned along the roadways with the gable or eaves side usually facing the street.

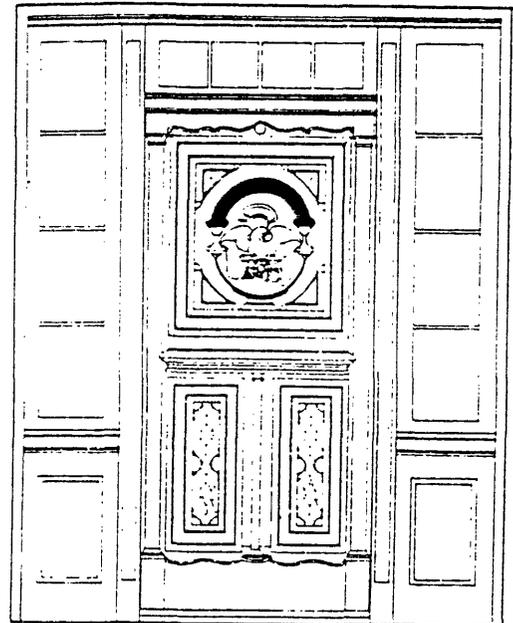


Fig. 4. Detail of Original Entrance Door.  
Connolly House. St. Donatus, Iowa ( Site 6 )

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American Adaptations:

The Luxembourg immigrant came to St. Donatus with a general knowledge of these traditional building types and a desire, conscious or unconscious, to replicate them. The need to adapt to new circumstances discouraged the complete transfer of traditional building techniques and settlement patterns. The stone houses of St. Donatus, with their characteristic interior and exterior features and the accompanying outbuildings, as well as the predominance of the Catholic Church, all speak to the European heritage of the community's early residents. Michael and Kathleen Conzen credit this "successful transfer" to the regional geography of Luxembourg settlement. "Luxembourg migration patterns almost guaranteed the (development) of communities (like St. Donatus) where (Luxembourg) norms would survive and exposure to American standards would be minimized. They arrived rapidly, in relatively large numbers, with a strong sense of identity that encouraged them to settle with others of their own kind. These were also districts relatively isolated from centers of dominant American or other ethnic culture (and) the Luxembourgers were fairly free to reproduce elements of their customary life without competition from alternative models." (Conzen, p. 8)

Notwithstanding the apparent transfer of architectural styles and techniques, the early settlers did not reproduce the village system they had known in their home land. Unlike Luxembourg, where they had lived in villages and cultivated tiny plots of land in commonly held fields outside the village boundaries, the geographical setting of the Tete des Morts valley and the U.S. government's homestead policy enabled the early settlers to individually acquire and improve large blocks of land. Farms of between 80 to 320 acres were developed across the landscape.

Despite this scattering of farmsteads, these recent immigrants quickly banded together to recreate the religious institutions that had been the focus of their lives in Luxembourg. They often donated

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land, contributed substantial portions of their income -- \$200 to \$500 -- and volunteered their services for the transport of required building materials. (Gonner, p. 253) These churches, frequently located on high ground, formed the early nucleus of the community and dominated the landscape. It wasn't long before a rectory, cemetery and parochial school system were also established. Corpus Christi chapels, Pieta chapels, Ways of the Cross, grottos, roadside and dooryard shrines would complete the landscape. While not exclusive to Luxembourg settlements, these religious features were particularly dense where Luxembourg immigrants settled in large numbers and where they retained a near-exclusive presence. (Conzen, p.7)

As the need to provide for surrounding countryside intensified, the village developed alongside the church. ( Fig. 5. ) Grist mills, taverns and general stores were built. A post office established. Housing for the proprietors of these establishments, laborers, artisans and others were also constructed. Nonetheless, the occurrence of these villages was far less per square mile and they offered far fewer services than the average rural Luxembourg village. (Conzen, p. 12) Their size and composition reflected little of the physical and social complexity of the homeland. (Conzen, p. 9)

The early Luxembourg immigrant found neither the same opportunity nor advantage in changing house styles that encouraged the modification of the structure of their villages and farms. The building elements with which they were so familiar -- floor plans, roofs, window and door arrangements -- were not so alien from then-dominant American styles that they would have appeared out of place. There was an abundance of stone available for building purposes. The Niagaran Dolomite that formed the bedrock and bluffs around St. Donatus was easily quarried and provided a ready source for lime, a principal ingredient of stucco. Wood was inexpensive, but infrequently used. Milled lumber was affordably priced and used for window sashes, wainscotting and doors. Equally attractive were wooden or lead shingles, and they were frequently used in lieu of the

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more expensive slate or more dangerous thatching materials which typify traditional Luxembourg construction. (Conzen, p. 10)



Fig. 5. St. Donatus, Iowa ( Date Unknown )

The full scale house-barn or Quereinheitshaus, typical of rural Luxembourg architecture, was rarely transposed upon the American landscape. "There was seemingly no strong reason to continue the juxtaposition of family, animals, and fodder under one roof in the vastness of America. With each family positioned squarely upon its own land, there was no call for crowding structures together, and both fire safety and sanitation argued against it. . . . Some stone barns were built . . . , but always positioned separate from the house, accepting the loose American farmyard grouping principal." (Conzen, p.11)

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Though a preponderance of surviving examples of Luxembourg architecture are constructed of stone, it was not the only building material from which these immigrants fashioned their homes. The first buildings constructed by the early Luxembourg settlers were simple ones of sturdy log construction, barely distinguishable from others erected across the Midwest. Though other settlers frequently lived in these log homes for some time before progressing on to more substantial housing, the residents of St. Donatus apparently considered these log homes nothing more than temporary shelter and soon erected more permanent residences of stone. This may be explained by the presence of six stone masons residing in and around the village in 1856-60. (Rogers, p. 109) (Village records indicate that five of the six stone masons were recent immigrants from Luxembourg. The sixth, Peter Kop, was believed to have been strongly influenced by traditional Luxembourg architectural techniques, despite his German heritage.) Others, particularly second-generation American-Luxembourgers, went on to construct frame homes in which it is possible to see the traditional features characteristic of the stone architecture.

Despite the modification of traditional Luxembourg architecture, be it through the availability of cheaper, more readily available materials or a lack of skills and technical knowledge to reproduce them in their entirety, the heritage of the early Luxembourg immigrants is particularly evident in the arrangement of the interior.

The typical Luxembourg stone house is "anchored to the traditional kitchen - parlor ( Stuff ) principal, with the main entrance opening directly into the kitchen from the front of the house. ( Fig. 6. ) The smallest homes had no other rooms beyond this elemental pair. Sleeping areas were in the parlor and the loft above, reached by a narrow staircase, turning in the corner of the room as it ascends to

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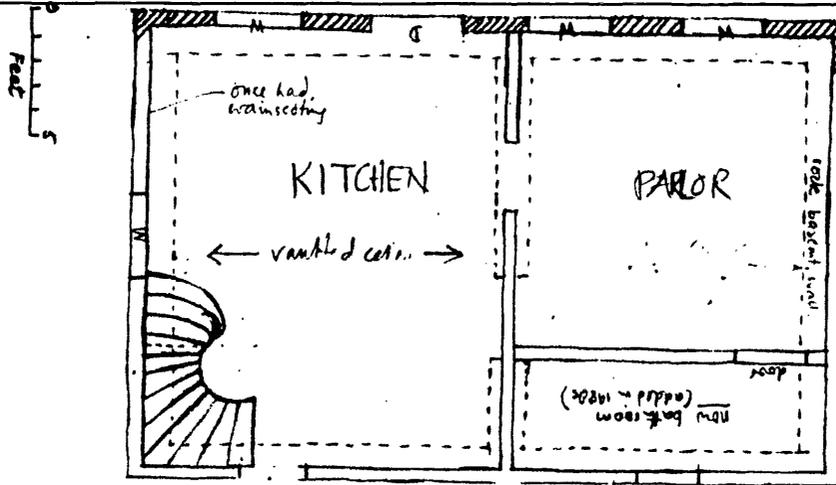


Fig. 6. First Floor Plan. Ploessl House. St. Donatus, Iowa ( Site 16 )  
Provided by Michael and Kathleen Conzen, 1988

conserve space. With greater capital, grander houses were built (and the traditional floor plan expanded) to include three or four rooms on the ground floor (with) four above. The grandest followed "newfangled" European (and for that matter, American) bourgeois styles and added a central hallway, creating greater privacy and an interior symmetry that matched that of the exterior. The full-scale winding staircase reaching three stories clearly distinguishes these homes from their American counterparts. Such features required highly skilled carpenters to fashion the numerous asymmetrical and curving wooden pieces that make up the staircase and bannisters. ... Down below, the houses frequently contained barrel-vaulted, or arched stone cellars, with meat hooks in the curved ceiling." (Conzen p.4)

In the main living areas -- both kitchen and parlor -- the stone walls were often recessed to accommodate built-in cupboards and niches. Fireplaces were rarely present as stove flues were built into the thick stone walls from the beginning. The interior face of the main walls and the partitioning walls, many of which were

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constructed of stone, were plastered and whitewashed in blue calcimine or other deep colors. (Conzen, p.5)

St. Donatus Prototypes:

Structures within the district have been grouped into five general categories -- Residential, Commercial, Religious/Educational, Agricultural and Ancillary -- in accordance with the original function of the building. Three levels of historic significance have been identified within each of these categories: Primary, Secondary, and Minimal. Structures determined to be of primary significance exemplify traditional rural vernacular Luxembourg architecture. Though not all of the architectural features characteristic of vernacular Southern and Lowland Luxembourg architecture may be present, the integrity of these primary structures is intact and modifications have been kept to a minimum. Contributory or secondary structures reflect the Luxembourg heritage of the village despite modified construction techniques, alternative building materials or minor alterations. Structures determined to be of minimal historic significance were classified as such because of their date of construction, lack of architectural integrity and/or absence of traditional Luxembourg architectural features. The ranking criteria used in the classification of each of the structures is discussed in the methodology section.

RESIDENTIAL / Primary Sites:

Seven of the residential structures identified within the district have been determined to accurately reflect the Luxembourg building traditions of the village's early inhabitants (Sites 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12a, and 44a). All are extant. Sites 6, 7, 9, 11, and 12a are located in the West Village. The Miller's House (Site 5), located just south of the West Village along the banks of the Tete des Morts creek, is in ruins, however, many of the building's Luxembourg features remain intact. The Kass Farm House (Site 44a) is located east of the church complex.

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Each of these primary residential structures is constructed of stone. A smooth light grey (Sites 6 and 11) or yellow/brown (Sites 5, 7, 12a and 44a) stucco covers the exterior walls of the buildings. Jerkin (Sites 5, 6, and 44a) and side-gabled roofs (Sites 7, 9, 11, and 12a), with little or no overhang, are present. Many of the roofs were constructed without the use of a ridgepole (Sites 6, 7, 11, and 44a). Each of the buildings is two stories in height with an attic or "ieweschte Speicher" overhead. Grain was stored in the attics of at least three of the buildings (Sites 11, 12a, and 44a). The mud/clay insulation, commonly used in early Luxembourg construction, can be found in the Heitzman House (Site 11). Windows and doors are arranged symmetrically. The primary entrances of all, with the exception of Sites 7, 9, and 11, are placed in the center of the main facade. The buildings are generally one and one half times (Sites 5, 6, 12a, and 44a) to two times (Sites 7, 9, and 11) as long as they are wide. Two of the structures (Sites 6 and 11) appear to have been loosely patterned after the traditional Luxembourg house-barn or Quereinheitshaus. ( Fig. 7. )



Fig. 7. Connolly House. St. Donatus, Iowa ( Site 6 )  
Shank, The Iowa Catalog, p. 23

The kitchen-parlor floor plan with two sleeping rooms above, common in early Luxembourg homes, is evident in all but the Connolly House (Site 6) where the grander four-over-four room

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arrangement is present. Enclosed and tightly turning stairways are found in the original kitchens of four of the structures (Sites 7, 9, 11, and 12a). Vaulted cellars were constructed (Sites 5, 6, 11, 12a, and 44a). The Frost and Ehlinger Houses (Sites 7 and 9) were built on bedrock which may explain the lack of cellars.

Each of these primary residential structures was erected during the initial development phase of the village of St. Donatus (1850 to 1870). The original property owners have been either identified as having migrated to the United States from Luxembourg or as having a Luxembourg surname.

The Connolly House (Site 6) was recorded by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) in 1934.

RESIDENTIAL / Secondary Sites:

Eight of the residential structures identified within the district have been determined to reflect the Luxembourg heritage of the village despite modified construction techniques (e.g., the use of ridgepoles), alternative building materials (e.g., frame or timber construction), or minor alterations (Sites 1, 3, 4, 16, 17, 18a, 25, and 26). All are extant and located in the village proper.

The architectural heritage of these contributory structures is most evident in their massing and fenestration. ( Fig. 8. ) The length of the buildings are generally one and one half times (Sites 16, 17, and 18a) to two times (Sites 1, 3, 4, 25, and 26) their width. Side-gabled roofs (Sites 1, 3, 4, 16, 18a, 25, and 26), with little or no overhang, are common. Many were constructed without the use of a ridgepole (Sites 1, 3, 4, 16, and 28). Each is two stories in height with an attic overhead. Windows and doors are arranged symmetrically. The main entrances of all, with the exception of Sites 16 and 17 are placed in the center of the primary facade and are oriented towards the street.

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Fig. 8. Aldunate House. ( Site 25 ) St. Donatus, Iowa ( 1989 )

The traditional Luxembourg kitchen-parlor floor plan is evident in Sites 1, 3, 16, 17, and 26. Enclosed and tightly turning stairways are found in the original kitchens of seven of the structures (Sites 1, 16, 17, 18a, 25, and 26).

Building materials vary. Sites 1, 3, 4, 25, and 26 are of frame construction. The Ploessl House (Site 16) is built of hewn timbers. Stone was used in the erection of Sites 17 and 18a. Many have undergone some minor alterations. Aluminum and vinyl siding has covered some characteristic Luxembourg features, most notably the second story windows (Sites 1, 4, and 26). Synthetic shingles and aluminum siding have hidden the timber construction of the Ploessl House and the original stucco exterior of the building. Frame additions have been attached to the primary facades of Sites 17 and 18a.

Each of these structures was erected during the second phase of village development (1870 to 1910). The original property owners and, when possible, the builders have been identified as Luxembourg

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immigrants, first generation American-Luxembourgers, or as having a Luxembourg surname.

COMMERCIAL / Primary Sites:

Two of the commercial structures identified within the district are believed to accurately reflect the Luxembourg building traditions of the village's early inhabitants (Sites 13a and 14). Both are extant and located in the village proper. The Gehlen House (Site 13a), located at the intersection of the Dubuque to Bellevue and the Gear's Ferry roads, served as a combination general store, tavern, inn and post office. According to local histories, the Wicke House ( Site 14 ) served as a combination store and tavern with a blacksmith shop in the rear. The building is located north of the Gehlen House, on the west side of the Dubuque to Bellevue Road. ( Fig. 9. )

The massing and exterior appearance of the buildings typifies traditional Luxembourg architecture. Both are constructed of stone and covered with a light yellow/brown stucco. Both have jerkin roofs with little or no overhang. The roof of the Gehlen House was constructed without the use of a ridgepole. Each of the structures is two stories in height with an attic overhead. The buildings are longer than they are wide. (The length of the Gehlen House is three times its width. The Wicke House is two times as long as it is wide.) The windows and doors are symmetrically arranged. The primary facades are oriented towards the street.

Many of the traditional interior features are present. The early straw/clay insulation is present in the Gehlen House. (The attic was once used to store grain.) Vaulted stone cellars are present in both buildings.

Despite minor alterations to the buildings -- window and door replacement (Site 13a) and a rear addition (Site 14) -- the integrity of the structures remains intact.

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The Gehlen House , and the accompanying barn, was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places on June 18, 1979.



Fig. 9. Intersection of the Dubuque to Bellevue and the Gear's Ferry Roads. Looking North. Sites 13a and 14. ( Date Unknown. )

### COMMERCIAL / Secondary Sites:

Three of the commercial buildings identified within the district have been determined to reflect the Luxembourg heritage of the village despite modified construction techniques and minor alterations (Sites 12b, 18c, and 18d). Two of the structures were used as blacksmith shops (Sites 12b and 18c). The other housed a grist mill (Site 18d).

The blacksmith shop located in the West Village served the residents of St. Donatus and the Tete des Morts valley as early as

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1858 (Site 12b). The building is constructed of stone quarried at the site. The upper portion of the southern wall has been removed and replaced with vertical timbering. Sections of the exterior walls have been covered with a light yellow/brown stucco. The gabled roof runs parallel to the street with little or no overhang.

Sites 18c and 18d are located in the village proper. Both are of frame construction with their foundations (Site 18c) and lower levels (Site 18d) formed from rough cut stone. The side-gabled roofs are moderately pitched and have little overhang. Both were constructed without the use of a ridgepole.

RELIGIOUS / EDUCATIONAL

The buildings included within this classification are located in the religious complex, developed between 1858 and 1885 under the direction of Father J. Michael Flammang, just north of the village proper and have served as the focal point of the village since the late 1850s (Sites 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, and 43).

Primary Sites:

St. Donatus Catholic Church (Site 42):

The original stone church, built in 1858 and modeled after St. Boniface in New Vienna, burned to the ground on November 24, 1907. Only the exterior stone walls survived. The existing structure was rebuilt on the site the following year. The stone walls of the original church were determined to be sound and were used in the reconstruction. The bell tower was built of stone quarried from the nearby bluffs, and topped by a wooden steeple. Like many of the traditional Luxembourg homes, there is little exterior ornamentation. The gabled roof, originally covered in slate, has little or no overhang. The exterior stone walls have been covered with a coating of cement and lime.

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Fig. 10. Catholic Church Complex . St. Donatus, Iowa ( 1891 )

Pieta Chapel (Site 37).

The Pieta Chapel was erected in 1885 and is modeled after the Chapel du Bildchen near Vianden, Canton of Diekirch - Vianden, Luxembourg. (Tritz, p. 47) The building is constructed of cut stone and topped by a simple wooden bell tower. The rock walls have been left bare. There is little exterior ornamentation. The gabled roof has little or no overhang. ( Fig. 11. )

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Fig. 11. Pieta Chapel, St. Donatus, Iowa ( Date Unknown )

St. Donatus Rectory (Site 41):

The rectory is perhaps the largest of the surviving Luxembourg structures. Constructed in 1857 of stone quarried from the nearby bluffs, the three story building is coated with a light yellow/brown stucco. The moderate pitch of its simple hipped roof and the

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absence of eaves typifies traditional Luxembourg architecture. The European heritage of its builders is also evident in the massing and fenestration of the structure. The building is roughly one and one half times as long as it is wide. Windows and doors are arranged symmetrically, one above another. Cross gabled dormer windows are evenly spaced along the roof. The primary entrance is located in the center of the main facade and oriented towards the street.

Tete des Morts High School for Young Men (Site 43):

Constructed in 1875 of rough cut stone, the el-shaped building is one and one half stories tall. The exterior walls have been left exposed. The massing and fenestration of the structure reflects the traditional Luxembourg architecture evident throughout the village. The main building is roughly two times as long as it is wide. The length of the attached wing (originally the teacher's residence) is one and one half times its width. Windows are arranged symmetrically with the narrow gabled dormer windows of the attic placed directly above the first floor windows. The primary entrance is located in the center of the main facade and oriented towards the street.

Secondary Sites:

The Way of the Cross (Site 38):

The Way of the Cross, constructed in 1861 under the direction of Father Flammang and believed to be one of the first developed in the United States, symbolizes Christ's journey to his crucifixion. The fourteen stations, each 5' X 5' in size with open, arched entrances and gabled roofs, are situated at intervals of approximately 250 feet adjacent to a dirt foot path that gradually winds its way to the top of the bluff and the Pieta Chapel. The parish chronicle notes that the brick alcoves were designed in "typical Luxembourg" fashion.

St. Donatus Cemetery (Site 39):

Located at the rear of the Church, the cemetery contains monuments of varying quality. Early headstones were made in Dubuque. Others

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were designed and carved from Ohio sandstone by O. Wenzler of Milwaukee. Elaborate iron crosses mark the graves of some of the parish's early members. An unusual wood monument (undated) with iron ornamentation is located in the cemetery. Perhaps the most notable monuments are those erected in memory of Father Flammang ( 1825 - 1883 ) and his mother, Elizabeth Schulte Flammang ( 1800 - 1877).

**AGRICULTURAL / Primary Sites:**

Two of the agricultural structures identified within the district have been determined to accurately reflect the Luxembourg building traditions of the village's early inhabitants (Sites 13b and 44b). The Gehlen Barn (Site 13b) is located in the village proper at the intersection of the Dubuque to Bellevue and the Gear's Ferry roads. The Kass Barn (Site 44b) is located east of the church complex.

Each is constructed of rough cut stone. A smooth light yellow/brown stucco covers the Kass barn. The exterior stone walls of the Gehlen barn have been left exposed. The buildings' moderately pitched side-gabled roofs were constructed without the use of ridgepoles. There is little or no overhang of the eaves. Each is two stories in height with an attic or "ieweschte Speicher" overhead where grain was stored. Narrow vertical openings are located along the walls of both -- possibly designed to provide ventilation within the buildings. The floors on the lower levels are constructed of stone slabs. There are two rooms, divided by a stone interior wall, on both floors of the Kass Barn. The Gehlen Barn has four rooms on both the first and second floor with interior stone walls, a central corridor and interior windows.

The Gehlen Barn, with the Gehlen House (Site 13a), were listed on the National Register of Historic Places on June 18, 1979.

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AGRICULTURAL / Secondary Sites:

Four of the agricultural buildings identified within the district have been determined to reflect the heritage of the village despite alternative building materials, modified construction techniques and/or minor alterations (Sites 10, 44c, 44d, and 44e). One of the structures (Site 10) was originally used as a stable -- it has since been adapted for residential use. The others served a variety of purposes: Corn Crib (Site 44c), Shed (Site 44d), and Chicken Coop (Site 44e).

Of the three, Site 10 most accurately reproduces the traditional Luxembourg building techniques evident throughout the village. Located in the West Village, the building is two stories in height, constructed of stone and covered with a light yellow/brown stucco. There is little overhang of its simple hipped roof. Though somewhat modified, the symmetrical arrangement of its windows is apparent. It is believed that the building was adapted for residential purposes in the mid to late 1930s.

Sites 44c, 44d, and 44e are located on the Kass farmstead, just east of the church complex. The Shed (Site 44d) and the Chicken Coop (Site 44e) are constructed of rough hewn logs with unusually wide chinks and filled with mortared limestone of assorted shapes and sizes. ( Fig. 12. ) The Corn Crib (Site 44c) is constructed on rough hewn logs without any apparent chinking. The buildings are utilitarian in both function and design.

ANCILLARY / Primary Sites:

A final feature of the village is the traditional Luxembourg smoke house (Site 18b). Located in the village proper, it is one of two surviving smoke houses in the community. (The other is located outside the limits of this study.) A third has been incorporated into the primary walls of the main house (Site 11) and is not easily distinguished as such from the exterior of the building.

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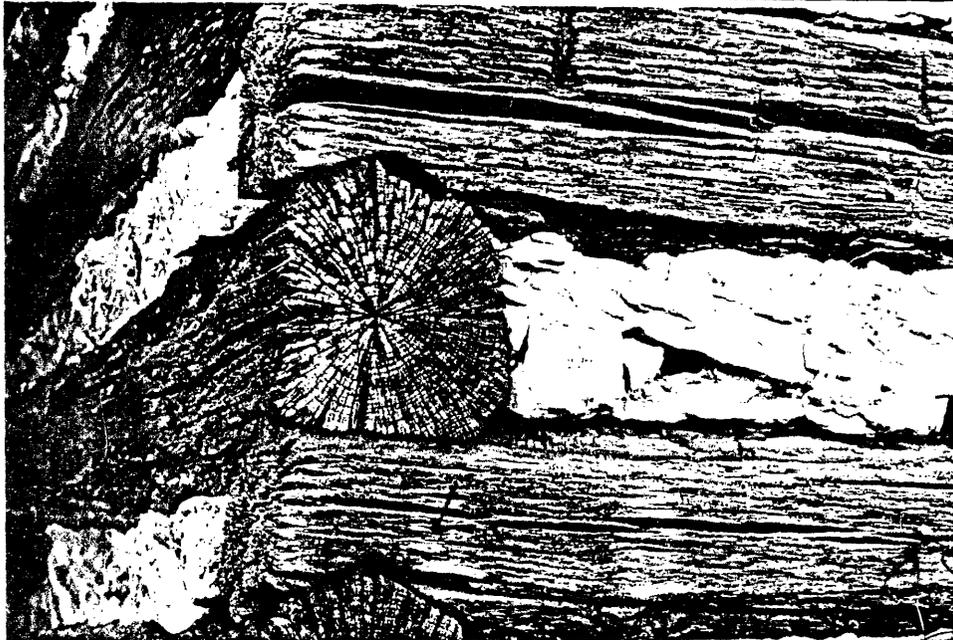


Fig. 12. Detail Log Construction. ( Site 443 )  
Kass Farm. St. Donatus, Iowa ( 1989 )

The smoke house is constructed of stone and situated just east of the main house (Site 18a). The rough cut stone walls of the square structure have been left bare. Its moderately pitched pyramidal hipped roof is covered with wood shingles. Evidence of a bake oven -- once a common feature throughout the village -- can be found at the back of the building. Access to the smoke house is gained through a single wooden door. The steel oven door is intact.

OTHER / Minimal Sites:

A total of twenty structures and sites located within the boundaries of the district were determined to have minimal historical significance in the early development of the village due to their date of construction, lack of architectural integrity, and / or the absence of traditional Luxembourg architectural features. Despite their lack of significance, the structures do not detract from the historical character of the district. The archeological value of the sites was not determined.

Included within this classification are Sites 2, 8, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, and 40.

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**TPOLOGY / SITE LISTING**

A comprehensive listing of Primary, Secondary and Minimal sites is available in Attachment A. ( Continuation Sheet Sect 7, Pg 31 )

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

With the exception of the Kass farmstead (Site 44), the boundaries of the proposed St. Donatus Historic District reflect a desire to stay within the limits of the original settlement area. The Kass farmstead has been included within the district because of its close physical proximity to the church complex and the historical involvement of the Kass family in the development of the Tete des Morts High School for Young Men (Site 43).

The western boundary of the proposed district follows the corporate limits of the village and runs from the western-most edge of town, north to Dubelchen Street where it extends along the outer perimeter of the St. Donatus Catholic Church properties. The northern boundary continues to follow the property lines of the church and extends eastward to include the Kass farmstead (Site 44). The eastern boundary extends from this point south, to East First Street, bisects the road and continues southwest to the intersection of East First and Main Streets, where it turns and extends to the southeast for approximately one hundred yards. The boundary continues southwest, at approximately a 45 degree angle, to the banks of the Tete des Morts creek, turning due south for roughly 135 yards. The northern boundary of the district runs west from this point for approximately 120 yards, turns northwest at a 45 degree angle, to Gears Ferry Road where it then follows the western property line of the Connolly House (Site 6) to the center of West First Street. Here it extends west to the corporate limits of the village and returns to the point of beginning. ( Fig. 13. )

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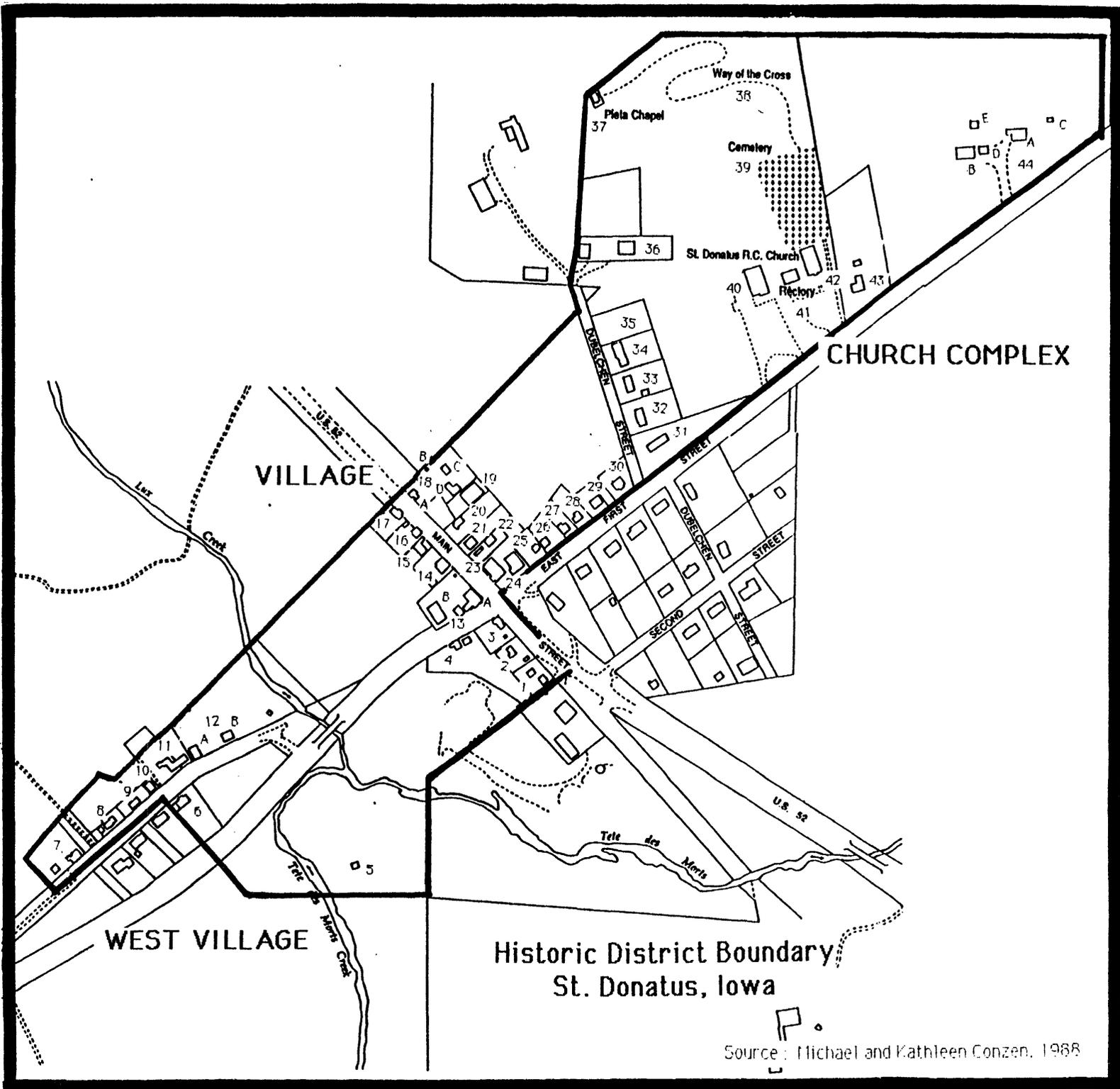


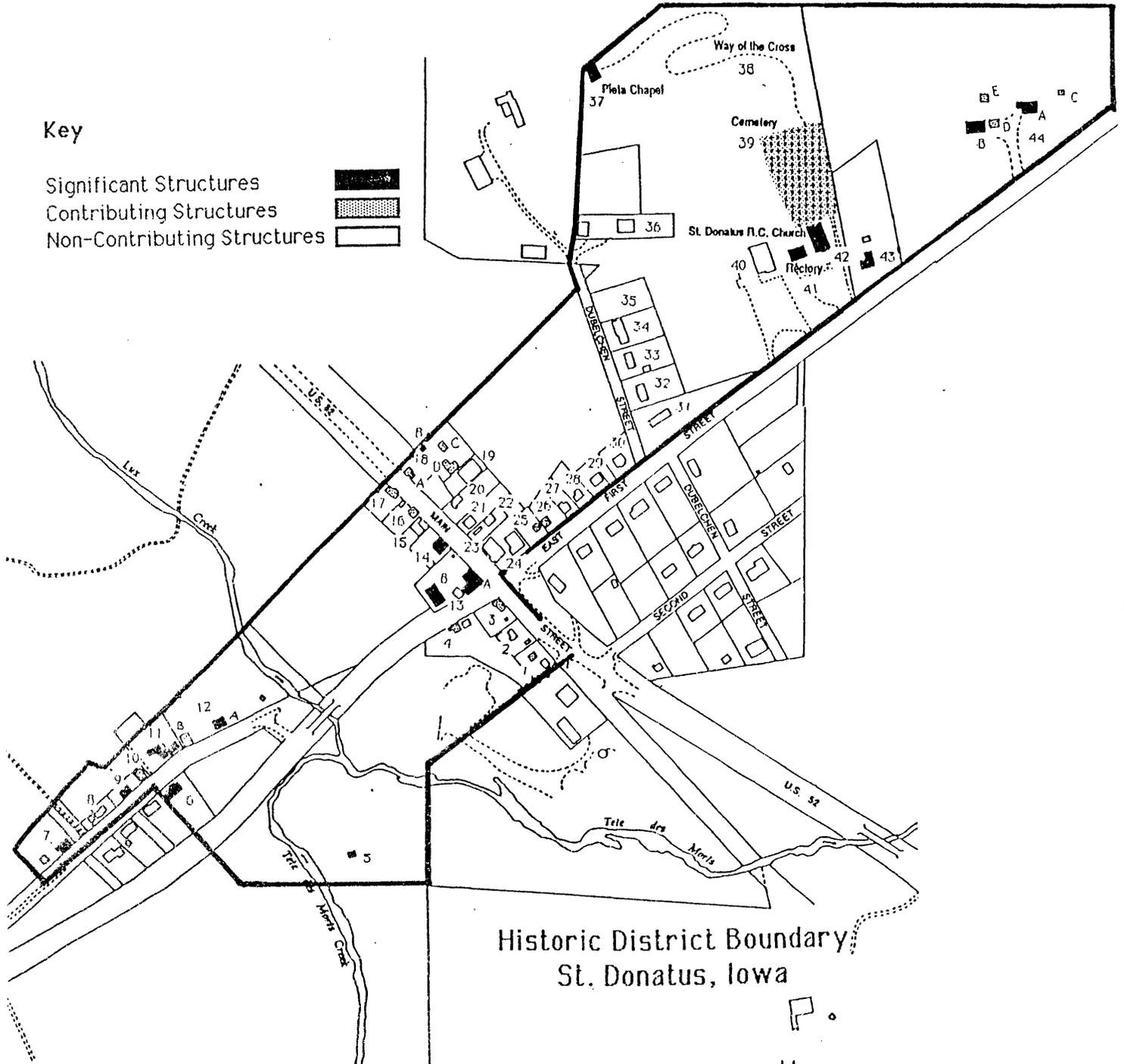
Figure 13. Village of St. Donatus Historic District Boundary

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**METHODOLOGY**

The National Register of Historic Places nomination of the Village of St. Donatus is the culmination of the work of many individuals over a period of five years. ( Note: The historical significance of the local architecture was acknowledged as early as 1979 with the nomination of the Gehlen Building and Barn (Sites 13a and 13b) to the National Register of Historic Places by its owners, Harold and Betty Fondell.)

In anticipation of the centennial celebration of the Catholic Church, the community, under the direction of Mary Pat Breitfelder, applied for, and received, a grant from the Iowa Humanities Board in the Fall of 1984. Grant monies were used to partially offset costs associated with the establishment of Luxembourg Awareness Days (June 1985). Two publications, The St. Donatus Story: A Bit of Luxembourg In America and a Luxembourg-English Dictionary, were printed and distributed. Mary Neils was retained to speak on Luxembourg migration patterns in the United States. A local historical society was founded. A museum documenting the history of the parish was established in the parish center and a replica of the Way of the Cross (1' to 12' scale) constructed.

A second grant was received from the Iowa Humanities Board in 1986. Suzanne Dockal-Rogers, whose Master's thesis, Settlement Patterns in the Tete des Morts Valley of Iowa, discusses the development of St. Donatus between 1833 and 1860, James E. Jacobsen, Chief of the Iowa Bureau of Historic Preservation, and Michael and Kathleen Conzen of the University of Chicago were brought in to speak about Luxembourg architecture and building techniques and the need to preserve the traditional stone buildings found in and around the village.

The community began to focus its energies towards the nomination of the village to the National Register of Historic Places the following year. On February 3, 1987 the village council passed an

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ordinance approving an application to the State Historical Society of Iowa for recognition as a Certified Local Government (CLG). The application was approved and the village became one of the smallest CLGs in the state on March 12, 1987.

The St. Donatus Historic Preservation Commission was formed and Tom Budde, Helen Kalmes, Roger Gerardy, and Ron Hilkin were appointed to serve. (Budde was later replaced by Toby Kirk.) The Commission applied for and received, two CLG grants. The first, a Planning for Survey grant, was used to photograph the architectural make-up of the community in 1987. Michael and Kathleen Conzen were retained to measure and photograph the extant stone buildings. The information collected during the project was presented at the "To Stay The Way We Are: Luxembourg Heritage and Rural Historic Preservation" conference at Old World Wisconsin (Eagle, Wisconsin) on October 29-30, 1988. The second grant, awarded in 1988, was used to finance the nomination itself.

Much of the historical research required in the development of the nomination was conducted by volunteers: Roger Gerardy, Chair of the St. Donatus Historic Preservation Commission, Judy Nemmers, Helen Kalmes, Betty Fondell, Amy Ehlinger, and Ron Hilkin. The research committee, with assistance from Alisa Gravert and Shirley Rittenhauer of the Jackson County Auditor's and Recorder's Offices, conducted an extensive review of the property transfers which had occurred in the community since 1847. The deeds of many of the properties within the district were made available to the committee by the current owners.

The information culled from their efforts was used to develop a listing of the early inhabitants of the village and those responsible for the development of St. Donatus. The committee went on to research the histories of these individuals. A variety of resources were identified: the Jackson County Historical Society (Jackson County Fairgrounds, Maquoketa), the Bellevue Public Library (106 N. Third Street, Bellevue), the Carnegie-Stout Public Library (11th and

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Bluff Streets, Dubuque), the Maquoketa Public Library (Second and Pleasant Streets, Maquoketa), and the Walhert Memorial Library's Local History Room (Loras College, Dubuque). Early population and agricultural censuses, county directories, and local and family histories were reviewed. Area newspapers, most notably the Luxembourg Gazette, were examined for references to St. Donatus and its early inhabitants. Before the Gazette could be used, it was necessary to reproduce the appropriate articles and have them translated from the original German. Nicholas Gonner's book, Luxembourgers in the New World, proved to be invaluable in locating references to the various individuals. (The second volume of the book provides a complete index of the personal and place-names cited in the Gazette between 1871 and 1918.) Mrs. Ray Beppe and Monsieur T.T. Theilen translated the articles. The Parish Chronicles and Father Flammang's records, located in the Parish Center, provided valuable information on the congregation and the construction and maintenance of the church and its holdings.

An architectural survey of the district, developed with the assistance of Michael and Kathleen Conzen, was conducted. Members of the committee collected information about the surviving ethnic features of buildings determined to be either historically significant or contributing to the nomination. Floor plans were sketched out and the dimensions of the various buildings noted.

Significant properties within the district have been classified according to the original function of the building. Each classification -- or typology -- was selected for its close association with the development of St. Donatus and for its ability to illustrate the Luxembourg building traditions evident throughout the community. This classification scheme draws heavily upon the research of American-Luxembourger architectural techniques conducted by Michael and Kathleen Conzen throughout the Tete des Morts valley in 1986-87.

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Standards of architectural integrity were drawn from a general knowledge of the original condition of existing buildings. Information from research literature, historic photographs and survey data was used to determine the degree to which allowances would be made for alteration. Ten key architectural features, characteristic of vernacular Southern and Lowland Luxembourg architecture, were identified: 1) Height, 2) Massing, 3) Orientation, 4) Construction Materials, 5) Exterior Wall Treatment, 6) Type of Roof, 7) Extent of Overhang of Roof, 8) Construction of Roof, 9) Fenestration, and 10) Interior Layout and Miscellaneous Interior Features. Structures classified as being of primary significance were identified as having eight or more of the ten characteristics. Structures of secondary significance had between five and seven of the features. Structures with four or less were classified as being of minimal historic significance.

The boundaries of the district were developed with the assistance of the Conzen's and include the "West Village", the village proper, the church complex, and the Kass Farm, just outside the village limits.

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Attachment A

**TPOLOGY / SITE LISTING**

RESIDENTIAL / Primary Sites

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
5	Miller's	NE SW S of HWY. Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
6	Connolly	Lots 20 and 21 Original Town of St. Donatus Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
7	Frost	Lots 12 and 13 Original Town of St. Donatus Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
9	Ehlinger	Lots 4, 5, 6, and 7 Original Town of St. Donatus Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
11	Heitzman	Lot 2 Original Town of St. Donatus Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
12a	Hilkin	Lot 2A Original Town of St. Donatus Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
44a	Kass	NE NE Ex. Parcels SW PT. Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

RESIDENTIAL / Secondary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
1	Weber	Lot 6 of Osmer's Subdivision Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
3	Hilkin	Lot 8 of Osmer's Subdivision Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

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**TPOLOGY / SITE LISTING ( continued )**

RESIDENTIAL / Secondary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
4	Berendes	Lot 5 of Osmer's Subdivision Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
16	Ploessl	Lot 1 of Art Ploessl Place Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
17	Thoma	Lots 3 and 4 and N Adjacent to Lot 1 of Ploessl P1 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
18a	Thielen	Lot 1 of Subdivision of Lot 1 of Lot 1 of Muchow-Felderman P1 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
25	Aldunate	Lot 2 of Kalmes Subdivision Surv. H. S. Book Page 217 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
26	Meisenburg	100' X 47' Lot in SW NE ( Filed 1 - 21 ) Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

COMMERCIAL / Primary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
13a	Gehlen	Lot 2 of Roman Heinrichy Place Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
14	Wicke	Lot in SW NW ( Filed 1 - 21 ) Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

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**T TYPOLOGY / SITE LISTING ( continued )**

COMMERCIAL / Secondary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
12b	Hilkin ( Blacksmith Shop )	Lot 2A Original Town of St. Donatus Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
18c	Thielen ( Blacksmith Shop )	Lot 1 of Subdivision of Lot 1 of Lot 1 of Muchow-Felderman P1 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
18d	Thielen ( Gristmill )	Lot 1 of Subdivision of Lot 1 of Lot 1 of Muchow-Felderman Place Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

RELIGIOUS - EDUCATIONAL / Primary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
37	Pieta Chapel	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
41	Rectory	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
42	Catholic Church	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
43	Boys School	Dennis and Laura Powers Place SW PT NE NE Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

RELIGIOUS - EDUCATIONAL / Secondary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
38	Way of the Cross	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

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**TPOLOGY / SITE LISTING ( continued )**

RELIGIOUS - EDUCATIONAL / Secondary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
39	Cemetery	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

AGRICULTURAL / Primary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
13b	Gehlen ( Barn )	Lot 2 of Roman Heinrichy Place Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
44b	Kass ( Barn )	NE NE Ex. Parcels SW PT. Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

AGRICULTURAL / Secondary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
10	Kalmes ( Barn )	Lot 3 and W 12' of Lot 2 Original Town of St. Donatus Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
44c	Kass ( Corn Crib )	NE NE Ex. Parcels SW PT. Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
44d	Kass ( Shed )	NE NE Ex. Parcels SW PT. Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
44e	Kass ( Chicken Coop )	NE NE Ex. Parcels SW PT. Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

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**TPOLOGY / SITE LISTING ( continued )**

ANCILLARY / Primary Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
18b	Thielen House ( Smoke House )	Lot 1 of Subdivision of Lot 1 of Lot 1 of Muchow-Felderman Place Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

OTHER / Minimal Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
2	Flammang	Lot 7 in Osmer's Subdivision Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
8	Herrig	Lots 8, 9, 10, 11 and 1/2 A on N- PER CRT. DEC. #20219 Original Town of St. Donatus Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
15	Timmerman	Lot 2 of Art Ploessl Place Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
19	Berendes	Lot 2 of Muchow-Felderman P1 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
20	Berendes	Lot 2 of Subdivision of Lot 1 Muchow-Felderman Place Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
21	Bies	Lot 2 of Subdivision of Lot 1 Kalmes Subdivision of SW NE Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
22	Kalmes	50' X 150' in NW Corner of Lot 1 of Subdivision of Lot 1 of Kalmes Subdivision of SW NE Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

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## TYPOLOGY / SITE LISTING ( continued )

## OTHER / Minimal Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
23	Kalmes	Lot 1 of Subdivision of SW NE and EX. 50' X 150' in NW Corner Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
24	Kalmes	Lot 1 of Subdivision of SW NE and EX. 50' X 150' in NW Corner Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 0427
27	Lippstock	52' X 160' Lot in SE SW NE ( Filed 1 - 21 ) Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
28	Loso	Lot in SW NE 160' X 35' and 160' X 30' in SW NE (Filed 1-21) Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
29	Felderman	80' X 110' SW NE ( Filed 1-21 ) Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
30	Nemmers	Lot 2 of Orville Frantzen Place Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
31	Lampe	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 A Lot 2 of 1, Lot 1 of Lot 2 and Lot 2 of Lot 2 Sec.07 Twn 087 Rng 04
32	Theisen	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 A Lot 2 of Sub Lot 2 of Lot 2 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
33	Robbins	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 A Lot 1 of Sub Lot 2 of 4 Lot 1's Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

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TYPOLGY / SITE LISTING ( continued )

OTHER / Minimal Sites:

<u>Site Number</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Legal Description</u>
34	Kalmes	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 A Lot 2 of Sub Lot 2 of 4 Lot 1's Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
35	Weber	St. Donatus Catholic Church P1 A Lot 2 of Sub Lot 1 of 4 Lot 1's St. Donatus Catholic Church Place Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04
36	Frost	Parcel in NW NE S of Jack Frost P1 No. 2 per W.D. 144-35 Sec 07 Twn 087 Rng 04

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France, and made the trip overland. Immigrants frequently traveled from Luxembourg in groups of ten to twenty-five families in an effort to avoid exploitation in these port cities.

Despite their common heritage, variations exist within the architectural traditions of these Luxembourg settlement areas. A survey of most major Midwest settlements, conducted by University of Chicago professors Michael P. and Kathleen N. Conzen, suggests two ways in which these communities differ from one another: the density of surviving "Luxembourg-style" homes and the purity of their style. In Ohio, despite the prevalence of stone in the area, a handsome mid-19th century red brick style, common to non-Luxembourg areas as well, prevails. In the Ridge, Illinois settlement, just north of the City of Chicago, urban development has so obliterated the original landscape, little of the original building traditions have survived. In Ozaukee County, Wisconsin despite the presence of stone houses, there exist few examples of early Luxembourg-style homes. A greater mixture of early non-Luxembourg housing is present than the make-up of the community would suggest. The strongest stylistic resemblance to traditional Luxembourg architecture and building techniques is found in the St. Donatus area. The stone buildings are numerous and the influence of the Old Country appears to have lasted into the early 20th century. (Conzen, p. 15)

By 1870 there were 1,344 Luxembourgers living in Iowa. Within ten years this figure had grown to 3,104. Some 1,000 Luxembourg families were scattered across the state, with the majority locating in the counties of Dubuque (450); Jackson (275); Plymouth (180); Black Hawk (60+); Kossuth (57); and Sioux (50). An estimated five thousand Luxembourgers resided in Iowa in 1889.

The Initial Development of the Tete des Morts Valley

The Tete des Morts Valley marked the southern boundary of the Mines of Spain lead mining area. Despite a federal survey of the area in

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1837, the United States government retained mineral rights throughout the valley and the land remained in public ownership until 1846 when the 29th Congress passed a bill approving the sale of reserved mineral lands in Illinois, Arkansas and the Wisconsin and Iowa Territories. The land in and around the village of Tete des Morts / St. Donatus became available for \$1.25 an acre in March 1847. Much of the land was acquired between June 1847 and January 1850 by John Dietrich Felderman and Adam Tritz. In July 1848, Issac Negus, an itinerant clock peddler, acquired the land upon which the western section of the village would later be situated. There is little evidence that Negus remained in the area beyond 1852, at which time he had sold off his land holdings. J. D. Felderman and Adam Tritz -- both Germans -- eventually settled in the Tete des Morts / St. Donatus area. Tritz (1824 - 1884) is felt to have been strongly influenced by the Luxembourgian culture due to his affiliation with the Catholic Church and the close proximity of his birthplace, Tunsdorf, to the Luxembourg border.

Though there is evidence that the first Luxembourgers settled in the valley in the mid-1830s, a majority of these early immigrants arrived in the area in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Most emigrated to Iowa from the cantons on the Belgian - Luxembourg border and from the Moselle River area. They were, according to Gonner, almost without exception, farmers. Their land purchases were large, ranging from 80 to 320 acres in size.

The first Luxembourg family in the valley, headed by J.B. Noel from Soes, Sampont province, located their homestead east of the village site on the Mississippi River in 1838. The family was joined by Peter Gehlen, his first wife Catharina Freymann, her relatives, and Charles Hoffman in the spring of 1846. Gehlen and Hoffman, both from Olm, Canton of Chapellen, arrived in Iowa via New Orleans and St. Louis. In the spring of 1847 Peter Siren and John Freymann (Freimann), both from Olm, Canton of Capellen, Nicholas Nemmers from Dondelange, Canton of Mersch, Heinrich Anen from Capellen,

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Canton of Capellen, Jacob Hilkin, and ( ) Braun and (Peter) Theisen, both from Kehlen, Canton of Capellen, arrived.

As the influx of Luxembourg settlers intensified, the village of Tete des Morts evolved with the initial development of the community occurring between 1854 and 1856. Rogers attributes its existence to a need to accommodate the growing number of Luxembourger



Fig. 14. West Village. St. Donatus, Iowa ( Date Unknown. )

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tradesmen and craftsmen arriving in the area and desire to augment the needs of the rural Luxembourg farm community already in existence. Larger land holders such as Peter Gehlen, J. D. Felderman and Adam Tritz, subdivided their holdings and real estate transfers increased. By 1860, the community's population included a total of sixty Luxembourger families. The census also indicates the presence of thirty craftsmen, of which all but five were Luxembourgers, with most being in their late twenties and early thirties. Many of these artisans purchased property in the West Village from Dominick and Anna Loewen, also of Luxembourg. The village was replatted this same year and renamed St. Donatus after the patron saint and a protector against storms.

The Social and Cultural Development of the Village of St. Donatus:

Opinions seem to differ concerning the degree of development realized by the village prior to the arrival of the first Luxembourg settlers. The very location of the Tete des Morts post office (1839-1852) is questioned as being either in the actual village or on the Mississippi River at the mouth of the Tete des Morts Creek. The village post office, titled "Saint Donatus", was established on August 30, 1855 with Peter Gehlen being the first postmaster, though some accounts establish its existence as early as 1852 (Tritz, p. 28).

The social and commercial focal point of the main village was a three story stone building, built by Peter Gehlen between 1848 and 1852 at the crossroads of the Bellevue - Dubuque Road and the Gear's Ferry Road. One of the largest structures in the settlement, the building served as the village post office, store, tavern and inn, as well as providing living quarters for the Gehlen household. ( Fig. 15. ) A blacksmith shop constructed c.1860 for Dettmar Osmer was located in the West Village. A flour mill was also in operation, though the date it was established is in question. An examination of the property abstract would indicate that the facility was erected between 1857 and 1860 for John G. Scheaffer. Scheaffer, a miller

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by trade, was apparently financially unable to operate the mill and the Sheriff of Jackson County, James Watkins, auctioned off the property in 1860. Other accounts credit Peter Gehlen with the development of the mill in 1848 though he did not acquire ownership of the site until 1862. The mill continued to serve the township as late as 1889.



Fig. 15. Intersection of the Bellevue - Dubuque and Gear's Ferry Roads. Looking North St. Donatus, Iowa. ( Date Unknown. )

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The village inhabitants had strong ties to the Catholic Church and the need for a place of worship increased as the community grew. Approximately forty acres of land were purchased for a religious complex on the 4th of December 1851 by the Vicar General, Joseph Cretin, on behalf of Bishop Mathias Loras, from Adam Tritz for the sum of fifty-five dollars. The deed carries the proviso that "said property shall always be and remain for the use and benefit of the Germ(an) Rom(an) Catholics." It is interesting to note that the frame church erected on the site was dedicated to St. Donatus on July 4, 1851, five months before ownership of the land was transferred to Bishop Loras. Prior to its erection, masses were held in the homes of Adam Tritz and (Nicholas) Nemmers. Additional land -- 4 acres -- was acquired, through auction, by Bishop Hennessey from H. Felderman in 1875. Dr. Peter Schwind donated approximately half an acre to the church that same year.

The St. Donatus parish was established as a mission church of Holy Trinity of Dubuque, Iowa. Following its dedication the Dubuque Diocese battled with the parish on the issue of intemperance. The parish went through a rapid succession of priests as a result, with a total of seven serving the parish in 1853 alone. Over half of the congregation was excommunicated during this period. In the fall of 1856, the frame building burned. The community rallied the following year with the construction of a new stone facility which functioned as both rectory and church. The building proved to be inadequate for the needs of the growing congregation and work on a more substantial stone structure, modeled after the church of St. Boniface in New Vienna, began. The cornerstone of the new church was blessed by Bishop Clement Smyth in April 1858. The framework of the building was completed in October 1858 but work ceased until December 1858 when a new pastor, Father Flammang, arrived. Dedication of the new church took place on June 3, 1860, marking the close of the early settlement phase of the village. The Catholic Church has remained the focus of community activity and identity throughout the history of the village.

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Persons Significant in the Development of the Village of St. Donatus:

Father J. Mich(a)el Flammang ( 1825-1883 ):

Flammang, born in Koerck (Koerich), Canton of Capellen, Luxembourg on December 6, 1825, immigrated to the United States in 1853 in response to a plea from Bishop Mathias Loras for German speaking priests. He was ordained the following year after completing his studies at Mt. St. Bernard Seminary in Key West, Iowa. By the mid-1860s, his parish included the mission churches of St. Catherine, Springbrook, Spruce Creek and Bellevue. The parish was bordered to the east by the Mississippi River; its southern boundary was located thirteen miles from St. Donatus; the western boundary 14 miles from the village and the northern boundary was five miles distant from the settlement. Like St. Donatus, this rural area was dominated by Luxembourg families. The "high water mark" of parish membership was the year 1862 with two thousand affiliated members and 134 baptisms. Flammang would lead the community until his death on December 6, 1883. He organized church societies, founded local traditions of religious celebrations, feasts and devotions, and organized the local parochial educational system.

St. Mary's Academy, a massive four story stone structure that would dominate the landscape until its destruction in 1969, was proposed in by Flammang in 1863. ( Fig. 16. ) Its construction (1864-1866) represented a tremendous community sacrifice in terms of labor and materials. When completed, the academy, under the patronage of Maria Sedes Sapientia, became a boarding school for girls, specializing in training in the domestic arts. Between 1870 and 1890 as many as 225 students were enrolled in the program.

A boy's secondary school (Site 43) was established by Flammang east of the church on land donated by Nicholas Cass (Kass). The one and one half story stone structure with an attached teacher's residence was constructed on the site in 1874-1875. This

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institution, the "Tete des Morts High School for Young Men", was only in session during the months of November through March. The building is currently used as a private residence and commercial bakery.

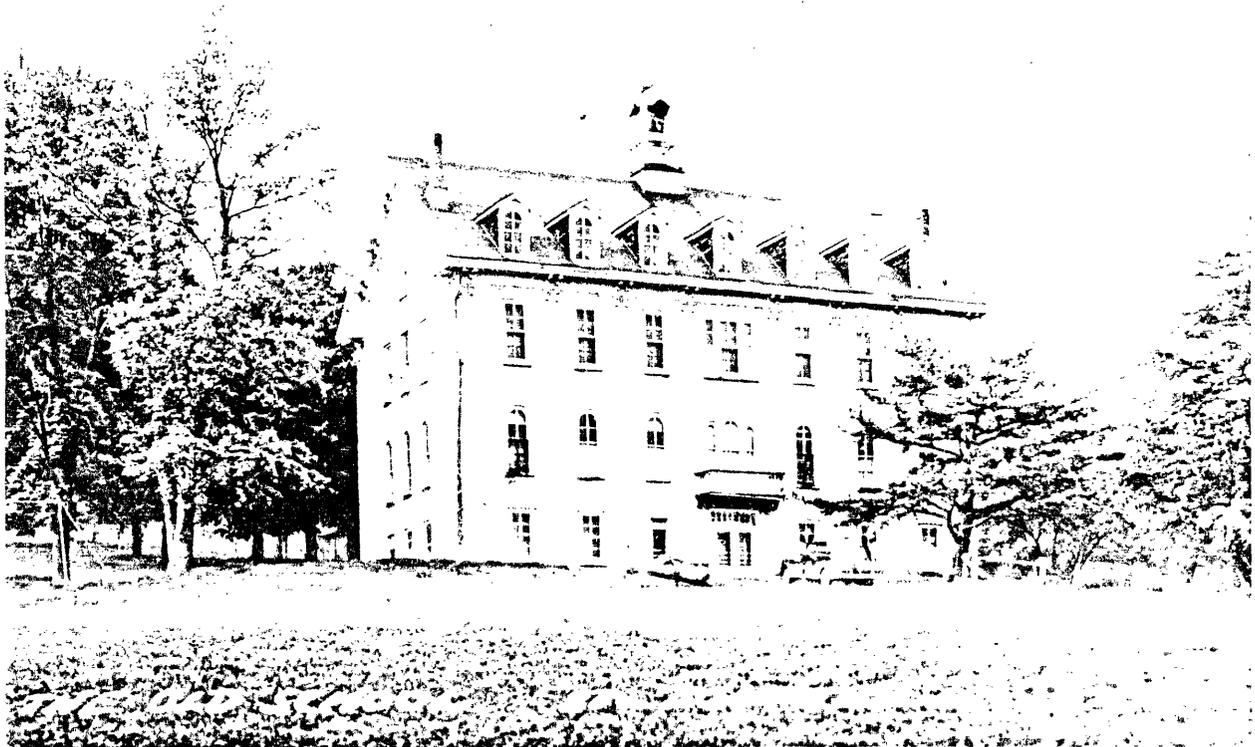


Fig. 16. St. Mary's Academy. St. Donatus, Iowa. ( Date Unknown. )

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Another of Flammang's projects was the construction on Calvary Mound of the Way of the Cross (Site 38). Blessed on August 15, 1862, the fourteen brick alcoves bear inscriptions in French, Spanish and English. Built in "traditional Luxembourg fashion," the brick structures are located adjacent to a meandering path that winds up to the top of the bluff. Sheep are allowed to graze the hillside, keeping maintenance costs to a minimum. The stations were repaired by the parishioners in 1925.

A Pieta chapel (Site 37), named for an altar piece in the chapel -- a wooden statute of Mary holding her dying son -- was erected in 1885 at the bequest of Father Flammang. The stone chapel, located at the top of Calvary Mound, was modeled after the Chapel du Bildchen in Vianden, Canton of Diekirch-Vianden, Luxembourg. The du Bildchen murals which originally covered the interior walls of the Chapel, were painted over in 1954-1955.

Flammang was one of the original founders and stockholders of the Luxembourger Gazette, as were fellow St. Donatus residents Dr. Peter Schwind and Peter Heuertz. The most "thoroughly Luxembourger newspaper in the U.S.", the Gazette was published in Dubuque, Iowa by the Catholic Printing Company from 1871-1918. Its mission was "to instruct, advise and admonish in all things Luxembourger." (Faber, p. 27) Flammang served as president of the paper in 1871, the result of a proviso in the by-laws of the company which declared that as long as a priest was stockholder, such priest would act as president. Flammang contributed articles and editorials to the Gazette for many years under the pseudonym, "Peregrinus". (History of the Catholic Press of Iowa, p. 18) By 1874, the Gazette was ranked seventh among Catholic newspapers with a circulation of approximately 3,000. (Faber, p. 58)

Dr. Peter Schwind ( \_\_\_ - 1881 ):

Dr. Peter Schwind, one of the co-founders of the Luxembourg Gazette, was a Luxembourg born surgeon and accoucher (midwife)

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who went on to achieve considerable notoriety as a curer of "cancer, caries, fractures, gout in any stage, mange of the head, disturbances of the abdomen, crooked limbs in children and female disorders". (Tritz, p. 54) "Dr. Schwind's Rose Heilsalbe", an ointment prepared and marketed by the doctor, was well received throughout the country. In 1876, his "Rose Heilsalbe" was distributed by sixty-four agents in as many as eleven states. During 1872-1879 the doctor operated a resident clinic in the village. Area histories (Tritz, p.56) indicate that Schwind's clinic may have been located in the Gehlen Building (Site 13a). On the 8th of October 1879, the doctor moved his practice to Dubuque ( No. 1392 at the corner of 14th and Clay Streets ). Schwind retired to LeMars, Iowa in 1880.

Peter Gehlen ( 1817/19 - 1878 ):

Peter Gehlen, credited by Gonner as the founder of St. Donatus, built the first and most substantial store (Site 13) in the village at the intersection of the Bellevue-Dubuque and Gear's Ferry Roads. He served as the village postmaster from August 30, 1855 to August 6, 1864 and again in December 4, 1866 through May 17, 1870. (Fig. 17.) A major property owner, Gehlen began to subdivide his holdings in 1857. On March 25, 1870, he relocated with his second wife, Maria Freymann, to LeMars, Iowa. (His first wife, Catharina, died in child birth in 1849.) The families of C.D. Hoffman, M. Biever, Christain Kous and Hansen, all of St. Donatus, joined Gehlen in this move.

John Koob ( Dates Unknown ):

John Koop, a native of Luxembourg and resident of St. Donatus, immigrated to the United States in the early 1860s. At the urging of Father Flammang, Koob served as the first editor of the Luxembourg Gazette after Nicholas Gonner, Sr. refused the position. (Financial difficulties in 1873-1874 brought about a change in personnel and on October 12, 1874, Gonner became sole editor and manager of the paper.) After leaving the paper in 1874, Koob returned to St. Donatus to become the principal of Flammang's Tete des Morts High

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School for Young Men (Site 43). Koob is also credited with completing the cut stone work required in the construction of St. Mary's Academy.

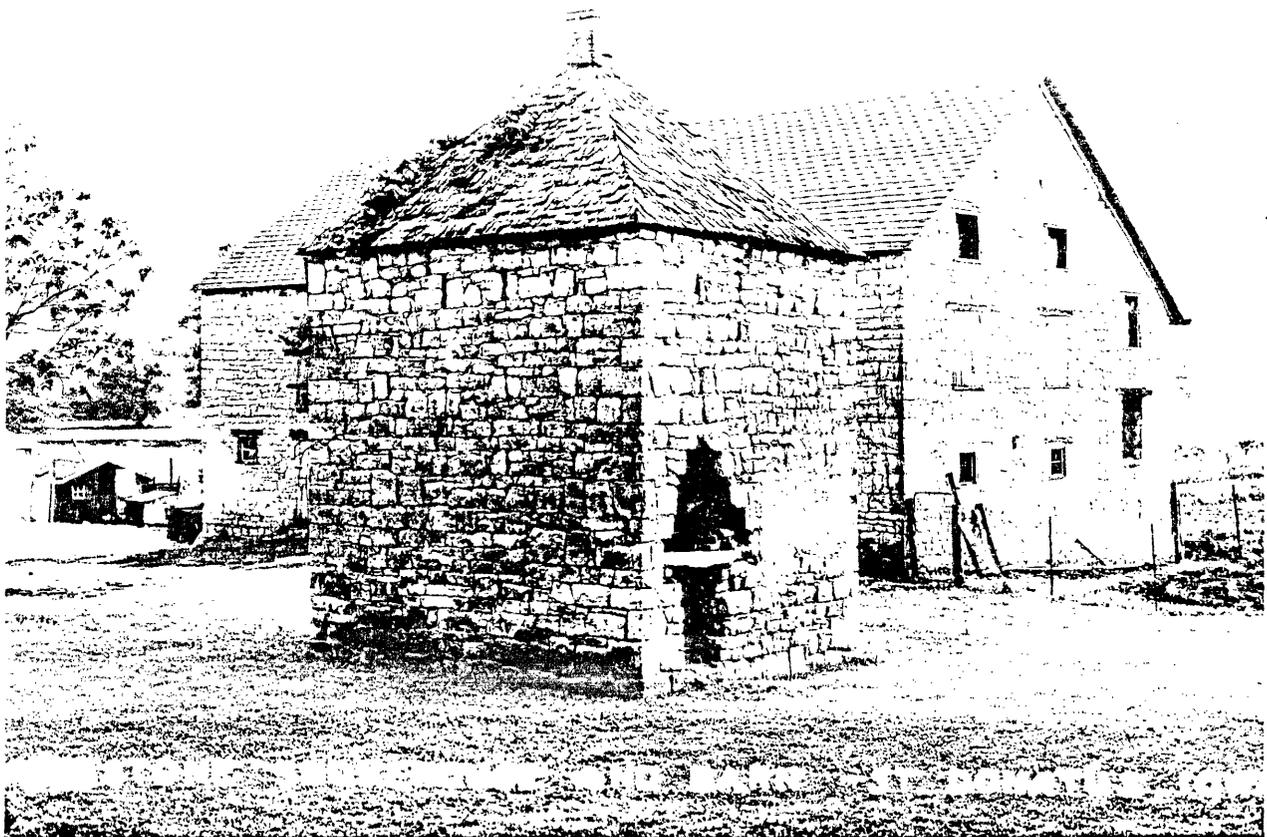


Fig. 17. Barn and Smokehouse built by Peter Gehlen ( Site 13 )  
St. Donatus, Iowa. ( Date Unknown. )

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The Decline of Luxembourg Influence in the Village

By 1870, the sons and daughters of the early Luxembourg settlers were ready to start their own families and farms. Many of the original immigrants were hesitant to subdivide their property holdings, farms were being consolidated and little land was available for their offspring. Many of these "second generation" Luxembourgers migrated west to establish new homesteads on federal land. Luxembourg settlements in LeMars, Plymouth County, Iowa and Caledonia, Houston County, Minnesota were soon established. Later, the descendents of these families moved on to the Dakotas and the area around Hastings, Nebraska.

One hundred and eleven families moved away from St. Donatus between 1870 and 1885. (Population in 1870 - 221 families, in 1876 - 189 families, in 1885 - 110 families.) Included among those who moved from the parish during this period were Dominic and Anna Loewen (Mazeppa, Wabasha County, Minnesota), Adam Tritz (LeMars, Iowa), Peter Kemp (LeMars, Iowa), Peter Arnsdorf (South Dakota), and Nicholas Knewel (LeMars, Iowa). The Parish chronicles (p.79) mention the "moving mania" that occurred during this period and the "destructive effect (it had) on the family and also religion." The parish size was further reduced in 1893 with the establishment of a new church, the Holy Rosary Parish, at LaMotte and the transfer of the mission of St. Nicholas in Spruce Creek to the parish of St. Joseph in Bellevue. Land and economic opportunities in western Iowa, principally LeMars in Plymouth County, drew families westward. Farm consolidation, in response to the development of new farm machinery, also played a role in reducing the availability of land locally. Though there was some replacement settlement from Luxembourg in response to the Franco-Prussian War and subsequent depression, by 1929 only fifty inhabitants remained in the village proper.

On November 24, 1907 the church was completely gutted by fire. The rectory and bell tower were barely saved. A building committee

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consisting of the priest, Father William Nuebel, and parishioners John S. Tritz, George Nemmers, George Lienfelser, Nick Flammang, John Haxmeier (Haxmeyer), John Thoma, Mike Welsch, Nick Heier, and John Weber was formed. (The families of many of the committee members, most notably Tritz, Nemmers, Flammang, Haxmeier, Thoma, Heier and Weber, had belonged to the congregation since 1856.) The committee agreed to rebuild the church on the original site and to reuse the existing walls. The construction contract was let to Anton Zwack of Dubuque, Iowa with the plans being drawn up by Martin Heer, also of Dubuque. The original stone of the main building was covered with a coating of cement and lime. Reconstruction of the church was completed in 1908-1909 at a cost of \$19,677.81.

The Tete des Morts High School for Young Men was closed soon after Flammang's death and resold to the Nicholas Cass (Kass), the original owner of the land, for use as a residence in 1902. As enrollments dwindled, the high school classes offered at St. Mary's Academy were dropped (1903). Classes were resumed in 1939 only to be discontinued again in 1947. As the influence of the Catholic Church diminished and increasing numbers of Protestants moved into the valley, the Academy lost its accreditation as a public school and the local school system became entirely parochial and self supporting in December 1950. (The parochial school system in St. Donatus had been accredited with the public schools since 1866, when the entire village was Catholic. The Academy was called Public School Number 2 as early as 1893.) The building housed elementary classes through the 1960s, on a very small scale, there being but 24 students in 1954.

By 1870, the rural Luxembourg settlement evident in and around the village of St. Donatus extended north into Dubuque County and was principally located in St. Catherine's Parish (formed from St. Donatus Parish) with 58 Luxembourg families included in the congregation's membership. Also in Dubuque County was the town of Luxembourg, with 32 Luxembourg families as of 1889. Other

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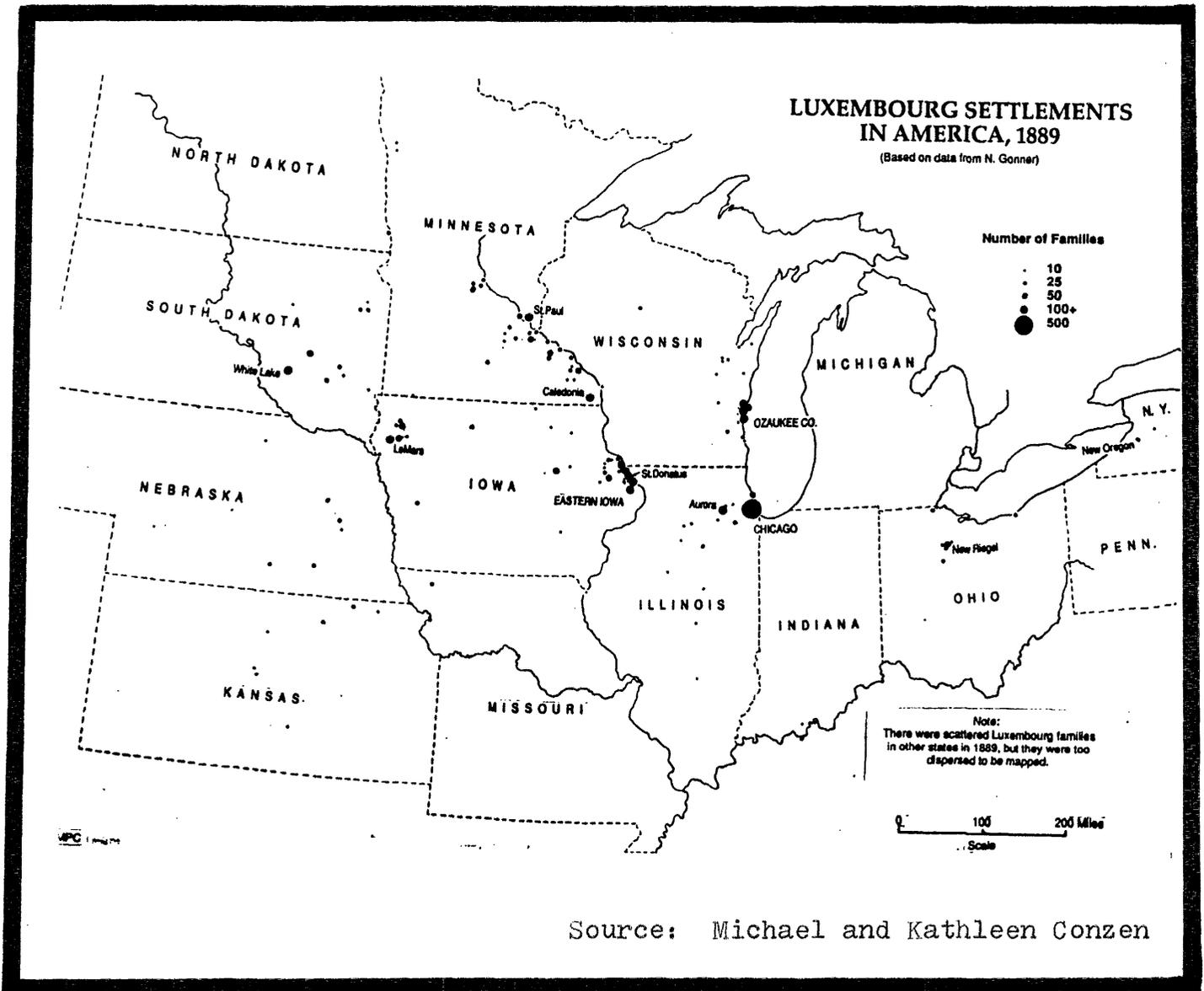
Jackson County communities with larger numbers of Luxembourgers were Bellevue (60 families), Spruce Creek Parish (16 families), Springbrook (80 families), Cottonville/Otter Creek (26 families), and LaMotte (12 families).

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Source: Atlas and Plat Book of Jackson  
County, Iowa ( 1913 )

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## PHOTO LIST

Village of St. Donatus, Iowa Historic District  
Jackson County  
Photographer: Sara Anne Daines  
Views:

- |  |  |                                 |
|--|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Thielen Blacksmith Shop<br>looking NE, #18c | 19. Church Complex<br>looking N              | 37. Heitzman<br>looking N, #11  |
| 2. Thielen Gristmill<br>looking E, #18d        | 20. Way of the Cross<br>looking NE, #38      | 38. Ehlinger<br>looking W, #9   |
| 3. Bies<br>looking E, #21                      | 21. Way of the Cross<br>looking W, #38       | 39. Frost<br>looking W, #7      |
| 4. Aldunate<br>looking N, #25                  | 22. Way of the Cross<br>detail, #38          | 40. Frost<br>looking W, #7      |
| 5. Meisenburg<br>looking N, #26                | 23. Pieta Chapel<br>looking NW, #37          | 41. Herrig<br>looking N, #8     |
| 6. Lippstock<br>looking N, #27                 | 24. Way of the Cross<br>looking E, #38       | 42. Kalmes<br>looking N, #10    |
| 7. Loso<br>looking N, #28                      | 25. Cemetery & Church<br>looking S, #39 & 41 | 43. Hilkin<br>looking SW, #3    |
| 8. Felderman<br>looking N, #29                 | 26. Cemetery<br>detail, #39                  | 44. Flammang<br>looking SW, #2  |
| 9. Nemmers<br>looking NW, #30                  | 27. Boys School<br>looking S, #43            | 45. Weber<br>looking S, #1      |
| 10. Lampe<br>looking N, #31                    | 28. St. John's<br>looking S                  | 46. Berendes<br>looking S, #4   |
| 11. Gehlen<br>looking W, #13A                  | 29. Village Proper<br>looking E              | 47. Gehlen<br>looking W, #13B   |
| 12. Frost<br>looking NE, #36                   | 30. Village Proper<br>looking E              | 48. Kalmes<br>looking E, #22    |
| 13. Weber<br>looking E, #35                    | 31. West Village<br>looking W                | 49. Gehlen<br>looking S, #13A   |
| 14. Kalmes<br>looking E, #34                   | 32. West Village<br>looking W                | 50. Wicke<br>looking W, #14     |
| 15. Robbins<br>looking E, #33                  | 33. Hilkin<br>looking NE, #12A               | 51. Berendes<br>looking E, #20  |
| 16. Theisen<br>looking E, #32                  | 34. Hilkin<br>looking NW, #12B               | 52. Wicke<br>looking S, #14     |
| 17. Rectory<br>looking N, #41                  | 35. Heitzman<br>looking W, #11               | 53. Timmerman<br>looking W, #15 |
| 18. Boys School<br>looking N, #43              | 36. Connolly<br>looking SE, #6               | 54. Ploessl<br>looking W, #16   |

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PHOTO LIST (cont'd)

55. Thielen  
looking N, #18A
56. Miller's  
looking S, #5
57. Rectory  
looking N, #41
58. St. Donatus  
landscape
59. St. Donatus  
landscape
60. Thielen  
looking SE, #18A
61. Thielen  
looking N, #18B
62. Cemetery  
looking S, # 39
63. Boys School  
looking E, #43
64. Kalmes  
looking NE, #10
65. Connolly  
looking E, #6
66. Hiltgen Monument  
detail, #39
67. Flammang Monument  
detail, #39
68. Monument  
detail, #39

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A.	15	702640	4693080
B.	15	702730	4693160
C.	15	703230	4693175
D.	15	703230	4693020
E.	15	702580	4692545
F.	15	702665	4692480
G.	15	702520	4692380
H.	15	702520	4692300
I.	15	702340	4692285
J.	15	702280	4692345
K.	15	702125	4692225
L.	15	702100	4692260
M.	15	702645	4692860

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 89001870

Date Listed: 11/8/89

Village of St. Donatus  
Property Name

Jackson  
County

Iowa  
State

Multiple Name

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

*Patrick Andrews*

Signature of the Keeper

*11/8/89*

Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

Acreage of the district was omitted from the nomination form. Lisa Linhart of the Iowa SHPO provided the correct information of 50 acres. She also clarified that the classification for the cemetery should be site rather than building; the total number of contributing resources remains 33, with 32 contributing buildings and 1 contributing site. The nomination form is amended to reflect these changes.

-----  
DISTRIBUTION:

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