

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 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 Dannevirke Danish Lutheran Church & Community Hall

other names/site number Dannevirke Church (NeHBS HW05-003)

2. Location

street & number Dannevirke Road & Wausa not for publication ☐

city or town Elba vicinity ☐

state Nebraska code NE county Howard code 093 zip code 68835

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 of certifying official

5/24/99
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

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): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Dannevirke Danish Lutheran Church & Community Hall

Name of Property

Howard County, Nebraska

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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**
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>4</u>		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**
0**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions)RELIGION: Religious Facility
SOCIAL: Meeting Hall
RECREATION & CULTURE: Music Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instruction)VACANT: Not In Use
SOCIAL: Meeting Hall
RECREATION & CULTURE: Music Facility

7. Description**Architectural Classification**
(Enter categories from instructions)LATE 19th & EARLY 20th CENTURY REVIVALS:
Classical Revival, Gothic Revival
Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)foundation Stone
walls Wood, Clapboard
roof Asphalt
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.)

Property is:

- ☒ **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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Settlement**Architecture****Period of Significance**

1901-1949

Significant Dates

1901

1906

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Jensen, Harry

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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 for Additional Data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	524435	4574340	3.			
2.				4.			

[] 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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Melissa Dirr, Architectural Historianorganization Nebraska State Historical Societydate April 1999street & number 1500 R Streettelephone 402.471.4787city or town Lincolnstate NE zip code 68501

Additional Documentation

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

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Dannevirke Church, Inc. & Community Hallstreet & number P.O. Box 92telephone 308.863.2115city or town Elbastate NE zip code 68835

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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Dannevirke Danish Lutheran Church & Community Hall

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DESCRIPTION

The Danish Lutheran Church and Community Hall in Dannevirke are located at a gravel crossroads in Howard County, Nebraska. Both wood frame buildings were locally designed and constructed. The Community Hall is a one story L-shaped building with Classically inspired details, while the church represents one of the most popular religious styles, the Gothic Revival. The two buildings are located caddy-corner from one another on a gravel crossroads approximately six miles east of Highway 11 the major north-south route through Howard County.

The geography of this area of Howard County consists of dissected plains. These appear as high plains that have been eroded to form steep drop-offs and hilly areas. The rural setting is wide open and surrounded by cultivated farmland. The Community Hall was built in 1901 to serve the Danish community at Dannevirke. It is a simple one story L-shaped wood-frame building that rises from a stone foundation. The cross-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Access to the building is gained through the cut-out corner entrance which is also the main exterior feature. It has double wood paneled doors that are capped by a transom window. All fenestration consists of two-over-two vertical panes with molded caps. The building faces northwest and is clad in four-inch lap siding. Also on the corner lot are two privies that still service the building. "Dannevirke" is painted on the west side of the building just below a diamond shaped cut-out. This sign greets visitors coming through town.

The interior was used for dances and public meetings and one is greeted by a central elevated stage with two side access stairs upon entering the building. All three of these openings retain detailed cornices with fluted pilasters at all sides. The entirety of the interior wall and floor surfaces is covered with wood. The floor is of wide pine planks while the walls and ceiling are covered with narrow beadboard, all of which has since been painted. Interior window framework also enhances the Classical style with detailed cornice boards. Other meeting rooms are adjacent to the main ballroom/meeting room area and consist of a kitchen, dining room, and storage area.

Across the intersection and northwest of the Community Hall is the Dannevirke Danish Lutheran Church. The main entrance to the church faces east. The church is also a frame building with stone foundation. The gable end roof is interrupted by the steep bell tower accenting the main projecting entrance which houses the narthex of the church. Double doors wood paneled doors with a triangular transom window above provide access to the main building. The vertical feeling of Gothic Revival is especially noted in the bell tower and the fenestration throughout the building. Above the entry door is a diamond shaped window, with a slight step back was the cut-out for the bell with pointed triangular capped openings, and above that is yet another triangular shape cut out of the steeply pitched cone that caps the tower. The original weather vane caps the belfry. Fenestration consists of four pointed windows on each of the north and south facades. The rounded apse of the church also has the same pointed openings. The windows have the same two-over-two vertical pane arrangement as the Community Hall. There is no stained glass. The church is surrounded by some of the original 28 red cedar trees that were planted one year after its completion in 1907.

The interior of the church reveals stunning details with a barrel vaulted ceiling, theatre seats in place of pews, and every surface covered with angled and vertical beadboard. Approaching the pulpit, one is lead down the main aisle covered with the original floral needlepoint runner. The apse of the church has a rounded shape with an arched ceiling. Hand painted stenciling adorns the arch above the pulpit. Three pointed windows are located behind the altar. The pulpit itself was designed by Jessie Smith from Denmark who was hired by Ole Nielsen to come to Dannevirke for this purpose. Hand crocheted altar cloths adorn both the pulpit and the piano. The baptismal font and the communion rail are all original to the building. Although services ceased here in 1980, the building remains in excellent condition.

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Alterations over time to the church include the removal of the bell from its tower when the steeple was struck by lightning in 1994 and deemed unsafe. The openings from the bell are now covered with plywood and the bell is mounted on a stand in front of the church.

Overall, both the Dannevirke Danish Lutheran Church and Community Hall retain a high degree of historic integrity and both convey their significance through their well maintained physical appearance.

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SIGNIFICANCE

The Dannevirke Church and Community Hall located in Howard County, Nebraska are eligible for listing on the National Register under both criterion A and C. Under criterion A the Church and Hall are significant as representatives of the Danish settlement of Dannevirke. They are the only remaining intact buildings from the community and illustrate the importance placed on the public buildings from the era. They are also significant under criterion C as the Community Hall reveals classically inspired ornamental details, with commonly seen ecclesiastical Gothic details in the church. Both buildings were built and designed by local craftsmen. Because the church was built and continues to function as a religious institution, criteria consideration A relating to religious properties applies. The church retains its significance for its contribution to the greater historical theme of Danish settlement in Howard County and is able to convey significance through its architectural design and integrity. This nomination includes the Church, Community Hall, and two outhouses associated with the Hall. The period of significance begins in 1901 the construction date of the community hall and extends to 1949 the established 50 year termination date.

HISTORY-COMMUNITY HALL

Dannevirke is located in south central Nebraska in Howard County. Geography in this area is defined as dissected plains, high plains that have eroded causing steep slopes and ravines. Howard County was a locus for Danish settlement dating from its earliest Euro-American settlement. Though some larger towns remain, like St. Paul and Dannebrog, many of the rural settlements are gone. Dannevirke exists today as a crossroads six miles east of Highway 11, the primary north-south route through the county. Located on a gravel road, the church and community hall appear at a crossroads and tell the story of the once hopeful settlement.

Danes began settling in this area of Nebraska in the early 1870s, taking homesteads near Munson Creek in the extreme northwestern corner of Howard County. With the establishment of School District 35 in 1874 and construction of a sod schoolhouse the organization of the community of Dannevirke was underway. The city was named after an ancient wall in Slesvig, Denmark that separated the Germans from the Danes. On February 16, 1880 the Dannevirke Post Office was established. Other signs of the community included a cemetery dating from 1879 and a number of frame houses. In these early years, no public buildings existed and settlers traded their wares at nearby Elba.

Talks began of building a church and community building during the 1890s but were delayed because of economic and agricultural depression. At the turn of the century Mr. and Mrs. Lars Christensen donated the tract of ground on which the Dannevirke Community Hall was built. In March of 1901 the Phonograph Press out of St. Paul, Nebraska reported that the first "binding meeting" of the Dannevirke Hal Association was held. This was a large meeting and coming together of different opinions regarding the organization of the town. The paper expressed that anybody expecting the people could not agree and settle on a plan of construction and organization were "woefully disappointed." It was at this meeting where the dimensions of the building were fixed at 28 x 56 feet. Carpentry was let to Harry Jensen, known as one of the best carpenters in the County and also a shareholder in the Dannevirke Hall Association. Materials were reported to have been bought from neighboring communities and far off places like hinges and locks from Chicago, and nails and lumber from Elba and Scotia, two nearby communities. The staking of the lots for construction of the Community Hall spurred the interest in construction in Dannevirke. Again, the Phonograph Press reported while covering the staking of lots that, "A yone who would like to start a grocery store in this flourishing Danish settlement should pre-empt this location before somebody else takes the chance." (March 22, 1901).

A community-wide dedication ceremony was held on May 5, 1901. This was Denmark's constitution day and is still celebrated by the community members. When the Hall was dedicated, the president of the Hall Association, John

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Andersen, spoke of the advantages of America. He envisioned unchecked prosperity as the children of Danish immigrants continued to build "a new Denmark within the boundary of the U.S.A." Also in 1901 the first store opened for business across from the Community Hall. According to local newspaper accounts of the dedication of the Community Hall, "everybody enjoyed themselves until the break of day. Dannevirke is the place to have a good time." (May 10, 1901). Feelings of unity and pride in their organization and accomplishment were a testament to the thrift and unity of the community. The Hall was used for many events such as dances, parties, town gatherings, and community socials.

HISTORY-CHURCH

Despite losing its post office in 1904 the settlers of Dannevirke were determined to build their own church. In 1904 a congregation called the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church of Dannevirke was formed and held their services in the Community Hall for their first two years of existence. All funds were raised locally and began at a fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration of Christen and Idte Leth when they pledged \$400 toward the construction of a church. Over \$2,000 was raised that day alone and land was donated by the Niels O. Nelson family for construction across the corner from the Community Hall. The church was completed in 1906 under the supervision of carpenter Cline Jensen with all volunteer labor. Jessie Smith from Denmark was hired by Ole Nielsen to build the church pulpit. The following year, in 1907, the church was landscaped with 28 red cedar trees, many of which still exist today.

The strong ties maintained by the community to their Danish heritage are very strong throughout the establishment of Dannevirke. During dedication ceremonies at the church in 1906 no English was spoken. In order to be a shareholder in the congregation a male had to be 18 years old and speak Danish. Although most attendants were first generation Americans, the ministers all came from Denmark and were dedicated to keeping the Danish language and customs alive.

It was of utmost importance to these men to impress upon the congregations that their first loyalty was to Denmark, and to maintain such customs as men and women sitting on opposite sides of the church during services.

This period (around 1910) was the height of concentrated Dannevirke settlement with a general store on one corner, the community hall across the street, the church on another corner, and a blacksmith shop finishing out the main intersection of the town. The pressure to Americanize was strong after World War I and was apparently one of the factors threatening to close the church. However, after some reorganization within their synod, it continued to function as a Lutheran church until 1980. It was at this time when the decision was made to dissolve the church organization requiring separation from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. As a result the church can no longer be called Lutheran and is today known simply as the Dannevirke Church.

Today the only two historic buildings from the Dannevirke settlement are the church and the community hall. The store burned in 1923 and the blacksmith shop has long since disappeared. These two buildings meet at a crossroads and provide a glimpse into the Danish settlement that once thrived in the area. With the community hall built to serve the social and organizational needs of the community and the church established to guide their spirituality and dedication to Danish culture, the citizens of Dannevirke strive to fulfill the vision of original hall president John Andersen who foresaw "a new Denmark within the boundary of the U.S.A." (*Blossoms on the Prairie*) However, even with the pressures of World War I acting as a catalyst to spur the Americanization of those still clinging to their mostly European traditions, Andersen's dream was not forgotten. Today the third and fourth generations of American-born Danes still identify Dannevirke as their home and thrive in the legacy left by their early settlers and their ethnic heritage.

CRITERIA EVALUATION

The Dannevirke Church and Community Hall are significant under criterion A as examples of the early Danish settlement in Howard County. The church had a broad impact on the history of the local area by helping to maintain the Danish

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language and culture, while the Community Hall served the public needs of the settlement. Although the Community Hall was separate from the church, they were associated through their cultural ties and in their relationship to serving the needs of the community. Both buildings worked together with services held at the church and socials immediately afterward at the community hall. While the church enhanced the spirituality and culture of the Danish people the community hall served their social needs by providing dances, Danish Constitution Day celebrations, and reception areas for weddings and funerals. Criteria consideration A applies to the church because it is a religious property. However, the church's primary historical significance is derived from its contribution to the broad settlement and cultural patterns of the area, and because it embodies the distinct architectural characteristics of its type and period.

The Community Hall is also eligible under criterion C. Individually each building represents different stylistic influences, but the interior design physically ties the buildings stylistically. The Community Hall illustrates Classical Revival details. The simple building has minimal exterior ornamentation, but Classical details are evident in the molded window caps. The interior more significantly represents the style with the center stage and access doors capped with a molded pediment, attached fluted pilasters and paneled doors with the same pilasters and molding. Detailed window caps also adorn the interior window frames. The Community Hall also has outstanding historic integrity, with virtually no changes made since its construction.

The church, built five years after the Community Hall represents one of the most popular ecclesiastical building styles, the Gothic Revival. Physical interpretation of the style is evident in the pointed windows, steeply pitched roof and vertical reaching bell tower. The altar inside has a large painting within a columned and pedimented backdrop, pointed windows, and dark woodwork all of which repeat the vertical nature of the Gothic Revival style. The church also has excellent physical integrity, with only minor changes made over time.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bethany Lutheran: Dannevirke 1904-1979. Local Church History, not published. 1979.

Church Records, unpublished books.

Howard County Deed Records.

Matteson, Jean M. and Ethel M. Blossoms of the Prairie: The History of the Danish Lutheran Churches in Nebraska. Lincoln, NE.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Nebraska State Historical Society, Historic Sites files.

Partsch, Ellen Kiechel. Howard County, The First 100 Years. Unpublished 1975.

The Phonograph Press. St. Paul, Nebraska, March 1, 1901; March 6, 1901; March 22, 1901; April 26, 1901; May 10, 1901; December 14, 1906.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Dannevirke Church resides on the SW ¼ of the SW ¼ of Section 28, township 16 north, range 12 west in Howard County. The Community Hall resides across the south and east across the street from the church and is located in the northeast ¼ of the northeast ¼ of section 32 in township 16, range 12 west in Howard County.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The Dannevirke Church and Community Hall encompass the land originally donated and associated with the properties and no more.



Photo 1 of 8 – Church, looking east
Photo by Melissa Dirr, 1999, NSHS (9902/10:25)



Photo 2 of 8 – Church, looking northeast
Photo by Melissa Dirr, 1999, NSHS (9902/10:24)



Photo 3 of 8 – view looking east
 Photo by Melissa Dirr, 1999, NSHS (9902/10:33)



Photo 4 of 8 – view looking west
 Photo by Melissa Dirr, 1999, NSHS (9902/10"32)



Photo 5 of 8 – Community Hall looking southwest
Photo by Melissa Dirr, 1999, NSHS (9902/10:23)



Photo 6 of 8 – Community Hall
Photo by Melissa Dirr, 1999, NSHS (9902/10:19)



Photo 7 of 8 – Community Hall
Photo by Melissa Dirr, 1999, NSHS (9902/10:20)



Photo 8 of 8 – Community Hall interior
Photo by Melissa Dirr, 1999, NSHS (9902/10:15)