

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Saint Benedict's Catholic Church (OT06f-9)

and/or common Saint Benedict's Catholic Church

2. Location

street & number 411 5th Rue ~~NA~~ not for publication

city, town Nebraska City ~~NA~~ vicinity of

state Nebraska code 31 county Otoe code 131

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name St. Benedict's Parish

street & number 411 5th Rue

city, town Nebraska City ~~NA~~ vicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street & number Otoe County Courthouse

city, town Nebraska City state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic American Building Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1934 federal state county local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington state D.C.

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date NA

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

St. Benedict's Catholic Church in Nebraska City is a simple brick vernacular Romanesque structure featuring buttresses and entry tower. Constructed in 1861, the church retains its historical integrity due to the conscientious care given the structure by the parishioners.

St. Benedict's Catholic Church is located at the summit of Kearney Hill, a sub-division of Nebraska City (1980 population 7,075). Built in 1861, the church was constructed of locally-manufactured brick and measures 87 by 34 feet. The building features a gabled roof and central entrance tower which houses an iron bell cast in Cincinnati in 1850. This bell was purchased by the parish after the steamer on which it was originally installed was ship-wrecked in the Missouri River.

St. Benedict's Church, recorded by HABS in 1934, is of relatively simple design with buttresses and imbrication under the eaves providing some ornamentation. Round-arched windows penetrate the facades and allow natural light into the sanctuary. The colored glass panes, imported from Germany were installed in 1910. An original wing and a more recent frame addition are attached to the rear of the building.

In 1948, the exterior walls began to spread and there was danger that the roof might collapse. The walls were dismantled, reinforced and then rebuilt using primarily original brick.

The interior of St. Benedict's though altered, retains its historical integrity. The church, which has a seating capacity of 200 people has retained its 1890's oak High Altar and walnut pews cut in 1861 from locally abundant trees. In 1945, the communion rail was moved further into the body of the church which created space for two new side altars. The interior walls have been painted several times throughout the years.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1861 **Builder/Architect** August Gerhardt/James Darley

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

St. Benedict's Catholic Church is significant in the area of religion for its 40 year association with Father Emmanuel Hartig, a determined missionary and Benedictine priest who did much to spread Catholicism in southeastern Nebraska. The church, built in 1861, is purportedly the oldest brick Catholic Church in Nebraska.

St. Benedict's parish was founded in November, 1856 when Father John Cavanaugh rode horseback from Omaha to hear confessions, perform baptisms and offer mass to the inhabitants of the fledgling community of Nebraska City. Father Cavanaugh departed after a few weeks and the spiritual needs of the Catholic residents were met by other priests who lived in the community for brief periods of time. Holy mass was given in private homes.

In 1860, Father Philip Vogg of the Benedictine Order was sent from Atchison, Kansas to serve as the first resident pastor for St. Benedict's. Father Vogg began the movement for the erection of the church building generally regarded as the oldest brick Catholic church in Nebraska. Father Vogg left the parish in 1861 before completion of the church and Father Emmanuel Hartig was assigned to the parish. Father Hartig served St. Benedict's for 40 years (1861-74 and 1881-1908) during which time he was responsible for the erection of six Catholic churches and the establishment of several parishes in southeastern Nebraska and northwestern Missouri. He became a legend among the early settlers, traveling on horseback, laying the foundations for future Catholicism in southeastern Nebraska.

Father Hartig was born in Bavaria, Germany, May 1, 1830. He was educated in Munich and at St. Vincent's College in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. In September, 1860 he was ordained into the priesthood in Leavenworth, Kansas. When Fr. Hartig came to Nebraska City in 1861 he had been assigned to do mission work as well as attend to his duties as parish priest.

Due to Father Hartig's inspiration, the Catholic community in Nebraska City began to expand. In 1865 an academy of Benedictine sisters was founded there and a school for ladies was established (the academy and school are no longer extant). By 1874, the parish had grown to such an extent that it was necessary to form another in the community. Nebraska City's growth had begun to move northwest, away from Kearney Hill and the Irish and English residents began to move in that direction also. A new parish, St. Mary's, was established in this new area which was nearer to the business district. With this separation of parishioners, St. Benedict's gradually became known as the German speaking parish.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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In 1910, Bishop Thomas Bonacum invited the Precious Blood Fathers to take charge of the two parishes in Nebraska City, ending a 50 year Benedictine administration. The community of the Precious Blood Fathers was founded in Rome in 1815 by St. Gasper del Bufalo and brought to this country in 1843 by the Reverend Frances de Soles Brunner. It was established as a missionary Society, but as the organization grew parish work was added to its scope. After 72 years, St. Benedict's continues to be under the direction of the Precious Blood Fathers.

9. Major Bibliographical References

St. Benedict Church 1856-1956, Committee, Nebraska City, 1956.

St. Benedict's Church 1856-1981, Committee, Nebraska City, 1981.

Andreas, A. T. History of Nebraska, Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1882.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Nebraska City

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	2	5	9	9	0	0	4	5	0	5	7	6	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

St. Benedict's Catholic Church is situated on lots 9 and 10, Block 28, Kearney Addition to Nebraska City, which includes all historically associated property.

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet Jeffries Spencer, Cultural Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society

date August, 1982

street & number 1500 "R" Street

telephone 402/471-3850

city or town Lincoln

state Nebraska

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Mervin R. Knott

12/8/82

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



Photo by Janet Jeffries, 1974 (structure has not changed since photo), NSHS (7410a-43)



Aspect: southeast. Photo by D. Murphy, 1974 (structure has not changed since photo) NSHS (7411/4:24)