

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

Pilgrim Holiness Church

AND/OR COMMON

"Baled Hay Church"

(AT01-1)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Arthur

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

\_\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Nebraska

CODE

31

COUNTY

Arthur

CODE

005

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Arthur County Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Arthur

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Clerks Office, Arthur County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Arthur

STATE

Nebraska

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic Preservation in Nebraska

DATE

1971

\_\_\_FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Nebraska State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Pilgrim Holiness Church at Arthur, Nebraska is a unique church structure built in 1928 of baled rye straw. The simple rectangular building is one-and-one-half stories in height and measures 9.65m by 17m (32 x 56 feet). The walls, which are 60cm (2 feet) thick, are made of rye straw bales which have been stuccoed on the outside and plastered on the inside (see photo #7). A small vestibule protrudes from the front or south facade of the church.

The interior of the church is simply furnished with seven rows of pews situated on a floor which slopes downward to the altar-platform (see photo #5). Behind the platform are two small rooms, one of which is a kitchen, the other a parlor. An enclosed stairway rises from the kitchen to two sleeping rooms above. According to local informant Joe Monhart, the rear part of the building served as the pastor's residence. Regular services are no longer held in the church which has attracted visitors from all over the world.

The Arthur County Historical Society owns the building and completed some restoration work on the exterior in 1976 with the assistance of a grant from the Nebraska Bicentennial Commission. A new wooden roof was laid and the exterior was re-stuccoed and painted.

# 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 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" 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 1928

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pilgrim Holiness Church represents a significant folk architectural response to the vast Nebraska Sandhills environment--a distinct, semi-arid ecology of sand dunes stabilized by grass cover and characterized by the almost total lack of traditionally suitable building materials. While materials were available locally throughout the region for sod construction, the ecology in a general sense was not suitable for its use. In the words of Roger Welsch (1970, p. 17), the Sandhills

"... magnified the difficulties of the previous homestead lands: they were even more barren of trees and the weather was even more hostile. Furthermore, the sandy soil made poor construction sod, for if it did not disintegrate during cutting and handling, it would soon crumble after being laid up in walls."

Sandhills grasses, however, when cut and baled, and protected with stucco or plaster proved to be a suitable material capable of withstanding gross environmental stresses for a considerable if not indefinite length of time.

The era of baled hay construction was basically that of the Kinkaid Homestead, an era which saw the closing of the western Nebraska, high plains and Sandhills frontier. Lands available under the old Homestead Act were not sufficient for farming purposes in this semi-arid region. In 1904, through the leadership of Moses P. Kinkaid of O'Neill, Nebraska, President Roosevelt signed the Kinkaid Act which made homestead lands of 640 acres available to the public in 37 western Nebraska counties. As a result, homesteading and farming activities in the area increased substantially in the following decades (Olson: 1966, pp. 258-59).

Along with the homesteaders came the need to build suitable houses and farm buildings. As stated above, baled-hay proved suitable and became a significant construction material, widely known and used particularly throughout the Kinkaid Sandhills (Welsch: 1970, p. 14). Pilgrim Holiness Church stands as the only known church built of the material anywhere and exists as a structure significant to the folk architectural traditions of Nebraska.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Arthur

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:62500

UTM REFERENCES

A 14 275850 4605400

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Janet Jeffries Spencer, Cultural Historian; D. Murphy, Survey Architect

ORGANIZATION

Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

May, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

1500 R Street

TELEPHONE

402/471-3270

CITY OR TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

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

Marvin F. Knott 5/3/79

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

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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Arthur County Historical Society, informants, Arthur, Nebraska

Monhart, Joe, informant, Arthur, Nebraska, 1978

Olson, James C. History of Nebraska. Second Edition. Lincoln:  
University of Nebraska Press, 1966.

Pilgrim Holiness Church Scrapbook, Arthur County Historical Society,  
Arthur, Nebraska

Welsch, Roger L. "Sandhill Baled-Hay Construction." Keystone  
Folklore Quarterly (Spring, 1970), pp. 16-34.



Photo 1 – south & east facades  
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/8:24)



Photo 2 – south facade

Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/8:21)



Photo 3 – south and west facades

Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/8:19)





Photo 4 – north and east facades

Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/9:20)



Photo 5 – interior looking north  
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/8:34)



Photo 6 – interior looking south toward vestibule  
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/8:37)