# **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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* 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.

| 1. Name of Property  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Historic name Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other names/site number Centenary United Methodist Church GA03-246   |  |  |  |  |  |
| .Name of related multiple property listing N/A   |  |  |  |  |  |
| (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)   |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Location  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Street & Number 608 Elk Street   |  |  |  |  |  |
| City or town Beatrice State Nebraska County Gage   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Not for publication [] Vicinity []   |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. State/Federal Agency Certification  |  |  |  |  |  |
| As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [x] 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 [x] meets [] does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: [] national [] statewide [x] local  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Applicable National Register Criteria: [] A [] B [x] C [] D  |  |  |  |  |  |
| supe /s:   |  |  |  |  |  |
| SHPO/Director  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signature of certifying official/Title: Date   |  |  |  |  |  |
| History Nebraska – State Historic Preservation Office  State or Fodoral agency/burgay or Tribal Government   |  |  |  |  |  |
| State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government  |  |  |  |  |  |
| In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.  Signature of Commenting Official  Date  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signature of Commenting Official Date  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signature of Commenting Official  Title  State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signature of Commenting Official  Title  State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government  4. National Park Service Certification  I, hereby, certify that this property is:  [] entered in the National Register.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signature of Commenting Official  Title  State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government  4. National Park Service Certification  I, hereby, certify that this property is:  [] entered in the National Register. [] determined eligible for the National Register.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signature of Commenting Official  Title  State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government  4. National Park Service Certification  I, hereby, certify that this property is:  [] entered in the National Register. [] determined eligible for the National Register. [] determined not eligible for the National Register.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signature of Commenting Official  Title  State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government  4. National Park Service Certification  I, hereby, certify that this property is:  [] entered in the National Register. [] determined eligible for the National Register. [] determined not eligible for the National Register. [] removed from the National Register.     |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signature of Commenting Official  Title  State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government  4. National Park Service Certification  I, hereby, certify that this property is:  [] entered in the National Register. [] determined eligible for the National Register. [] determined not eligible for the National Register.  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Signature of Commenting Official  Title  State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government  4. National Park Service Certification  I, hereby, certify that this property is:  [] entered in the National Register. [] determined eligible for the National Register. [] determined not eligible for the National Register. [] removed from the National Register.     |  |  |  |  |  |

**Signature of Keeper** 

**Date of Action** 

| Centenary United Methodist Church                    |  |                                    | Gage County , Nebraska  |                                     |  |
|--|--|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| Name of Property                                     |  |                                    | County and State  |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    |   |                                     |  |
| 5. Class   | ification                              |                                    |   |                                     |  |
| Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply) |  | Categ                              | cory of Property (Check only one box)                                   |                                     |  |
| [X]  |  |                                    | [X]   | Building(s)                         |  |
| []   | Public-local                           |                                    | []  | District                            |  |
| []   | Public-state                           |                                    | []  | Site                                |  |
| []   | Public-federal                         |                                    | []  | Structure                           |  |
|  |  |                                    | []  | Object                              |  |
| Number   | of Resources withi                     | in Property (Do not include pre    |   |                                     |  |
|  |  | Contributing                       | Noncontributing   |                                     |  |
|  |  | 1                                  | 0   | _ Buildings                         |  |
|  |  |                                    |   | Sites                               |  |
|  |  |                                    |   | Structures                          |  |
|  |  |                                    |   | _ Objects                           |  |
|  |  | 1                                  | 0   | _ Total                             |  |
| Number   | of contributing res                    | sources previously listed in       | the National Reg  | ister                               |  |
| 6 Funct  | ion or Use                             |                                    |   |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    | 0   |                                     |  |
| RELIGI   | · ·                                    | tegories from instructions.)       | <b>Current Functions</b> (Enter categories from instructions.) RELIGION |                                     |  |
|  | OUS FACILITY                           |                                    | RELIGIOUS FACILITY  |                                     |  |
| Church   | ioos i neilii i                        | <u> </u>                           | Church  |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    | Charen  |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    | -   |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    | <del></del>   |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    |   |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    |   |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    |   |                                     |  |
| 7. Descr   | ription                                |                                    |   |                                     |  |
| Architec   | tural Classification                   | (Enter categories from instruction | ns.)  |                                     |  |
| LATE 1   | $9^{\text{TH}}$ AND $20^{\text{TH}}$ C | ENTURY REVIVALS                    |   |                                     |  |
| Gothic I   | Revival                                |                                    |   |                                     |  |
| Late En  | glish Gothic Revi                      | val                                |   |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    |   |                                     |  |
|  |  |                                    |   |                                     |  |
|  | (enter categories fro                  | ·                                  |   |                                     |  |
| Principal  | exterior materials                     | of the property: Silv              | erdale Ashlar Cut L   | imestone and grey Bedford Limestone |  |

| United States Department of the Interior                                       |
|--|
| National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form |
| NPS Form 10-900  |

| OND NO. 1024 001 | U |
|------------------|---|
|                  |   |
|                  |   |
|                  |   |

Gage County, Nebraska

OMB No. 1024-0018

Name of Property

Centenary United Methodist Church

**County and State** 

# Description

**Summary Paragraph** (Briefly describe the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Centenary United Methodist Church (UMC), built in 1929-30, is an exceptional example of Late English Gothic Revival church architecture in Nebraska. The church features characteristic design details of high Gothic style, including a 90-foot-high square, turret-topped tower, the centerpiece of the upward aspiring facades. Buttresses, arched art glass windows, belt courses at various levels, and Gothic tracery in windows and other openings. The interior design also features representative Gothic elements such as the open truss roof /hammer beam ceiling in the nave, and arcaded arches defining the side aisles in the nave. Centenary UMC is situated just north of downtown Beatrice, Nebraska (2020 population 12,222), at the northeast corner of Sixth (Highway 77) and Elk Streets in a mixed use neighborhood. Commercial businesses, other churches, and residences are nearby. The church property occupies nearly an entire city block, and has a large parking lot on the north half of the tract. The west-facing church building is located on the southwest corner of the property. A three-story brick apartment building (1910) is located on the extreme southeast corner of the block at 305 North 7th Street. The apartment building faces east, is under separate ownership, and does not detract from the historic setting of the church. The nomination includes one contributing building.

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

# Exterior

Centenary United Methodist Church is a three-level building with an ell-shaped footprint, and features classic Late English Gothic Revival details. Built in 1929-30 of Silverdale ashlar cut limestone quarried in Kansas, the trim surrounding the windows, doors, and tower is of grey Bedford, Indiana limestone. The variation in stone provides a subtle contrast in tone while maintaining a basic monochromatic design often found in English Gothic Revival buildings. The original slate roof was replaced with asphalt in 1979. The walls on the east, north and south facades of the nave are flanked by engaged buttresses. A long east-west gable roof shelters the nave and is intersected with a north-south transept gable toward the west end. The north and south gables are decorated with large wall lanterns, while the west gable features a huge "Great Window," an ornate, beautiful art glass piece that is situated behind the chancel and from the interior, serves as the central focus of the nave. Below the Great Window, a single low roof shelters a band of rectangular art glass windows that are under the choir space.

The focal point of the building is a stunning 90-foot tall tower. Topped with spires, and adorned with Gothic tracery, the large, square topped tower defines the main (west) entrance to the church, and houses the 19<sup>th</sup> century bell salvaged from the congregation's 1885-86 "Red Brick Church." when the older church was razed to make space for the Centenary.

There are three window levels on the north and south facades of the long, rectangular nave. The lower level daylight windows on the north, placed in five sets of three, are utilitarian and provide light for the dining hall/fellowship assembly space. The side aisle-level windows on the north façade are arched, feature stone tracery, and are set in five pairs. Each set of windows is encased in slightly projecting arched surrounds. Those windows are separated by engaged buttresses that define the bays and also separate the daylight window sets below. The northeast entrance to the church is accentuated by a decorative frontispiece at the top of a curved staircase leading into the narthex. The remodeled staircase replaced two narrow stairways to the entry landing that descended east and west of the door.

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The original stone cheek walls from the two stairways remain as part of the newer stairway design and stoop.

The south façade window patterns match those on the north façade, how there are just three sets of windows due to the placement of the tower and narthex. On both facades, the side aisle windows are covered with lower, single-sloped roofs. Clerestory windows, topped with bands of dentils, are located on both the north and south facades to illuminate the nave.

The main (west) entrance to the church is at the base of the tower. The tower marks the separation between the main part of the church and the church school wing. The section of the building south of the tower houses the church school department. This façade also features three levels of windows. On the main level are a series of windows with arched surrounds; however utilitarian windows are located at the lower and second levels. The east-west end gable features a curved bay window that from the interior is part of the pastor's office. The building's cornerstone is located on this façade at the southwest corner.

The main entrance to the church school department is on south facade. Sets of rectangular windows on three levels are placed asymmetrically on this handsome façade, that includes a doorway located east of center, and surrounded by a frontispiece. A large, arched, colored glass window, salvaged from the congregation's 1885 Red Brick Church, is mounted over this entrance above a name stone that announces this entry as the church school wing.

The east, or rear, façade is simple and rather unadorned. Three levels of modest rectangular windows are set in rows on the facade south of the elevator shaft. These windows are divided into eight lights. A few windows on each level were removed for the installation of the elevator shaft. The shaft and entrance to the elevator were placed in this location as this is the rear façade of the church, and there was an existing doorway that could be utilized in the construction. The rectangular windows north of the shaft, are more ornate, and placed in connected sets of three. They are located in the formal, first floor parlor and feature metal tracery. The elevator shaft has a gable roof and is faced with ashlar cut limestone to match the original church. The gable of the shaft features a large, simple applied cross.

# Interior

The interior of Centenary Church retains strong integrity, and any alterations have been sympathetic to the building's original design.

The church features several exquisite, Gothic-arched windows made of colored glass, and the building also has many attractive rectangular windows. The fenestration detail displays a mix of fine curvilinear openwork Gothic tracery, clear glass, and vibrant, colored glass set in pictorial and other complex designs.

There is much artistic symbolism throughout the church. For example, the six colored glass, double windows on the north and south walls of the nave, contain special panes of glass dedicated to the apostles and their cause of death. Other symbolic design details include wooden and metal decorative designs at the ends of the pews, over doorways, on door handles, ceiling beams, under the balcony, and on the altar. Commemorative plaques are found throughout the church, and special wall colors that represent immortality, power, God's love and more, are used in the painted areas throughout the building.

The main (west) entrance to the church is at the base of the tower, and opens into a vestibule. The original limestone cornerstone from the congregation's first "Old Stone Church," built in 1868, is mounted here, and the congregation's 1885-86 "Red Brick Church," is also memorialized on the east wall of the vestibule with salvaged brick from that church, and a descriptive plaque. The coffered vestibule ceiling is of dark wood decorated with delicate floral motif stenciling. From the west vestibule, one can access other floors in the building using a staircase located north of the vestibule, but

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visible through open-stone windows. This stairway leads to the lower and second levels. Visitors may also gain access to the narthex, and other areas of first floor, via a flight of five stairs rising to the east from the vestibule. This west tower entrance has become a secondary entrance, as the congregation uses the more convenient north doorway that is adjacent to the parking lot and close to the nave.

The narthex extends south to north from the small parlor in the south church school wing, to the northeast entrance of the church. At north end, three arched doorways lead into the nave, and arcaded arches separate the narthex from a large formal parlor to the east. The parlor features a fireplace, comfortable seating, and Gothic tracery window fenestration.

The large nave has a central aisle plan, and features north and south side aisles defined by arcaded arches. The space has an open truss roof /hammer beam ceiling. Typical of Gothic tradition, the ceiling aspires upward, and represents man's reach toward God. The side aisles feature colored, arched windows, and also have colored clerestory windows above the aisles. A massive "Great Window," as the congregation calls it, is the focal point of the nave. It is mounted in the west facade providing a beautiful backdrop to the chancel. Made of more than 4,000 pieces of colored glass, the window is dedicated to Jesus with his cross occupying the center panel. The glass panels tell the life of Christ from his birth to death and his ascension into heaven. Other Christian symbols are also included in the design.

Directly behind, and west of the chancel, are choir seating and the organ console. The large pipe organ was built by the Reuter Organ Company of Lawrence, Kansas. The organ pipes are discreetly housed in two rooms on the north and south sides of the nave, each labeled Great Organ Room in the original floor plans. The rooms are located high above the nave on either side of the chancel. A mesh material covers the exposed walls that face the chancel allowing sound to flow from the pipes. Behind and below the choir and organ console area, is a practice room and also storage for choir robes and other materials.

The south entrance to the church leads into the Sunday school department. This part of the building houses 41 Sunday school classrooms and several assembly rooms. The rather complex Sunday school set-up is important, in that the design of the church reflects the Sunday school procedure taking place at the time in Methodist churches.

The church school entrance opens into a stairwell that provides access to the lower level, and also to the small, informal first floor parlor that is surrounded by a two-story atrium. The paneled ceiling in the atrium, originally included a skylight, and is decorated with stenciled, geometrical designs. A large wall lantern adorns the north wall of the atrium. Several Sunday school rooms originally surrounded this parlor that also served as a Sunday school assembly space, Assembly rooms located throughout the church, provided a location for Sunday school students to gather before and after breaking into age-specific groups in the surrounding classrooms. First floor classrooms were combined throughout the years to create larger spaces, however when dividing walls were removed, the doors leading to the hallways and atrium were often left in place. Several first-floor classrooms, that were located east of the parlor, are now one larger space that houses the church library and archives. The west classrooms are now administrative offices, near the pastor's office/study that is remains in its original location in the southwest corner of the building. The small parlor now serves as a seating area. The rather minor alterations in this particular parlor/atrium/classroom area allowed the support beams and other details in the atrium to remain, so the space retains its architectural integrity.

This church had a large congregation when constructed, and the building was designed to accommodate a large Sunday school program and miscellaneous activities. All ages, including adults, attended Sunday school, hence the 41 classrooms, and several assembly spaces, as shown on the original floor plans. Most of those spaces are essentially intact.

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In addition to the small parlor/assembly space located inside the south church school entrance, there is a second floor assembly area located behind (east) of the nave balcony and another on this level located between the atrium and the balcony. These second floor assembly areas are connected by classroom-lined hallways. The eight second-floor classrooms surrounding the atrium, used the first floor parlor for a gathering space.

The basement assembly space, located under the nave, was designed and still is used as a dining room/fellowship hall as needed. It was originally surrounded by eight classroom niches now used for storage. There is a stage at the west end of the dining room area, that was also utilized as an elevated playroom for small children who had Sunday school on this level. A kitchen is located at the east end of the dining room/fellowship space. Under the narthex and south Sunday school wing, on the lower level, are more classrooms, but larger, and they were used for the primary grades and toddlers. There was a nursery or "cradle room" on the lower level as well.

An interesting feature found in all classroom doors is a service cabinet (small pass-through door) that allowed a Sunday school assistant to gather written attendance sheets, and collect offerings without disturbing the class.

The church has had two important alterations in the past 40 years. An elevator, and necessary mechanical tower, was added to the back (east) façade in 1980 to provide easy access to the three levels of the building. The elevator tower is built of compatible limestone, blends with the fabric of the original church, and is unobtrusively situated at the back of the church where an original doorway was located. The interior elevator entrances on each floor were easily placed in existing hallways.

In 1990, the northeast entrance was altered to provide a wide, curved staircase leading into the narthex. This replaced two narrow stairways to the entry landing that descended east and west of the doorway. The original stone cheek walls from the two original stairways remain as part of the newer stairway design. An art glass window, that incorporates the official cross and flame symbol of the United Methodist Church, adopted in 1968, was placed above this doorway. This entrance has become the main, and most used entrance, due to its proximity to the nave, parking lot, and the stairway to the lower level dining/fellowship space.

The Centenary United Methodist Church has admirably retained its interior and exterior architectural integrity through maintenance and remodeling projects over the years.



| Centenary United Methodist Church   | Gage County , Nebraska  |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| Name of Property  | County and State  |  |  |
| 8. Statement of Significance  |   |  |  |
| <ul> <li>A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.</li> <li>B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.</li> </ul> | Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.) Architecture  |  |  |
| X 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                   | Period of Significance 1930   |  |  |
| history.  Criteria Considerations   | Significant Dates 1930 – Building constructed   |  |  |
| (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)   |   |  |  |
| Property is:  X A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.  B Removed from its original location.   | Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above.) $N/A$   |  |  |
| C A birthplace or a grave.  | O In LASSIN AT  |  |  |
| <b>D</b> A cemetery. A reconstructed building, object, or   | Cultural Affiliation N/A  |  |  |
| E structure.  |   |  |  |
| <ul> <li>F A commemorative property.</li> <li>G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.</li> </ul>   | Architect/Builder Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Architects, Des Moines Ernest R. Rokahr, Builder, Lincoln, Nebraska |  |  |
|   | Linest N. Auram, Dunuel, Lincoln, Neulaska  |  |  |

| United States Department of the Interior                                       |
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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Centenary United Methodist Church is significant under criterion C, architecture, as one of the finest Late English Gothic Revival churches in Nebraska. Just a few Nebraska churches exhibit the comprehensive English Gothic details of Centenary Church. The limestone building, built in 1929-30, features a tall, square spire-topped tower, buttresses, and large traceried windows reflect the longevity of the Gothic style in England. The building, although designed by an Iowa architectural firm, exhibits the strong influence of renowned contemporary Gothic Revival architect Ralph Adams Cram of Boston, and also reflects the appreciation that Reverend Charles W. McCaskill, who was serving at the time of construction, had for this style. Meticulous care was given during construction by the building committee and Reverend McCaskill to ensure that quality builders and craftsman were utilized in the project. Criteria Consideration A is marked because the Church is used for religious purposes, but it is eligible in spite of this due to its architectural merits under Criterion C.

# Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The 1929-30 Centenary United Methodist Church is significant for its architectural design; however it is also important to note, from an historical standpoint, that this congregation also has deep roots in Nebraska Methodism, and represents one of the very first enclaves of Methodist settlement in the state.

During Nebraska's territorial days, Reverend John Young organized a Methodist Church in Nebraska City, and soon after, members of that congregation were sent to find a location on the Big Blue River. Early Methodist settlers had actually started to congregate in the Beatrice area, a small settlement on the Big Blue River, in the late 1850s. Also in the 1860s, John Prey, and other Methodists settled on Salt Creek near the future town of Lincoln, and began worship services. These three congregations, dating to territorial days -- Nebraska City, Beatrice, and Lincoln -- are considered to be the foundation for Methodism in Nebraska.<sup>1</sup>

The Beatrice Free Church Association had been formed in the 1860s as the first religious organization in town, and people of various denominations cooperated to have services in shared locations. In 1868, this group started construction on a stone building at the corner of Fourth and Elk Streets, not far from the present Centenary Church site, and called it "The Stone Church." It was built by members with stone quarried from the nearby town of Blue Springs, and became the first church building in Beatrice. This somewhat unfinished building was used for a short while by several denominations, including the Methodists. In 1870, the Beatrice Free Church Association transferred sole ownership to the Methodist congregation, who agreed to assume the debt, and finish the building. The Stone Church then, became the first home to the Methodist congregation that, at the time, consisted of 42 members. After several years, the congregation needed more space, and in 1885-86, built a large brick church two blocks east of the Stone Church at the northeast corner of Sixth and Elk Streets, the site of the current Centenary Church. The brick church that became commonly known as the "Red Brick Church was named Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

<sup>1</sup> Don W. Holter, Flames on the Plains, A History of United Methodism in Nebraska. Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1963.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Hugh Jackson Dobbs, *A History of Gage County, Nebraska, A Narrative of the Past*, Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1918.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Don W. Holter, Flames on the Plains, A History of United Methodism in Nebraska. Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1963.

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Methodism in America. At the Christmas Conference in Baltimore, Maryland December 24, 1784, John Wesley and Methodists in America had pushed for, and succeeded, in creating an official national organization for the Methodist Episcopal Church. Many late 1880s Methodist congregations across the country then, incorporated the term "Centenary" into their names during this centennial era.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Red Brick Church became too small for the congregation, although an addition had been constructed in 1915 that brought the total number of classrooms to 26. A balcony was added in 1918, but still the building did not meet the needs of the time. The congregation began to consider a new larger church to be located on the Red Brick Church site. After several years of planning and consideration of funding options, the project moved forward. The Red Brick Church was razed in 1929 to make room for new building, and the congregation held services other locations in town. The 1904 parsonage, razed in 1975, was retained, at that time, but was moved one lot to the east to provide more space for the new church. Construction moved along quickly on the church. Ground was broken in June, 1929, and a cornerstone laying ceremony was held on Sept 22, 1929.

The Centenary congregation had formed a building committee and set out to build a beautiful, functional, and reverent showplace. Instrumental in the function, design, and symbolism for the new building was Reverend Dr. Charles McCaskill, who was appointed pastor of the Centenary congregation in 1926. He took charge of the church project and quickly provided the energy to move forward. He and his wife, Nellie, traveled abroad to visit and to gather designs, photos, and drawings of Gothic churches in Europe and England. Reverend McCaskill, was admired for his great appreciation for art and architecture in general, and was also known for his excellent taste. He worked closely with the architects, craftsmen, and decorators to ensure that the building met his standards. Reverend McCaskill's hands-on approach assured that skilled builders and craftsmen, and superior materials were used in the construction.

The Centenary congregation enlisted the architectural firm, Dougher, Rich, and Woodburn, Des Moines, Iowa, to design the new church. The principals were James A. Dougher, Herbert E. Rich, and Chester C. Woodburn. The company, under this name, operated in Des Moines from 1923 until 1953, and specialized in substantial public and semi-public buildings. Their prolific design portfolio included courthouses, schools, churches, and collegiate buildings. The quality of their work is noted in the Wartburg College Historic District NRHP nomination form. After the death of Rich in 1949, the firm went through several changes, and in 1954, emerged as Woodburn and O'Neil with Chester Woodburn's son William, and Eugene C. O'Neil joining the firm. Senior partner Chester Woodburn continued with the company until his death in 1960. Centenary UMC is the only known Nebraska building designed by this firm.

The church was built by contractor/stone mason Ernest R. Rokahr of Lincoln. Rokahr, whose sons were also part of the company, was considered a master builder, and during his decades-long career, constructed numerous major buildings for well-known architects that included schools, a hospital, and courthouses in the region. <sup>8</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Joan Hall Davidson, Unpublished manuscripts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "Former Pastor Passes Away," Reverend Charles W. McCaskill obituary, Beatrice Daily Sun, 1943.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Murphy, D. "Dougher, Rich & Woodburn, Architects," in David Murphy, Edward F. Zimmer, and Lynn Meyer, comps. *Placemakers of Nebraska: The Architects*, Lincoln. Nebraska State Historical Society, January 2, 2017, Accessed October 28, 2021

Rebecca Lawin McCarley, "Wartburg College Historic District, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2022.
 David Murphy, "Ernest R. Rokahr (1862-1936), Contractor," in David Murphy, Edward F. Zimmer, and Lynn Meyer, comps.

Placemakers of Nebraska: The Architects, Lincoln, Nebraska State Historical Society, March 5, 2015, Accessed March 18, 2022 and Rokahr Family RG3584.AM, manuscript collection, History Nebraska, Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, accessed March 16, 2022.

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In order to achieve the desired quality of workmanship and design, the Centenary building committee assembled an impressive team to create the church. Many of the artisans were Nebraskans, but had regional and national reputations. Out-of-state companies were also enlisted for specific tasks. The firms were listed and thanked in the 1930 dedication program. <sup>9</sup> Among the firms and workmen were:

- James F. Willer, painter and decorator, Beatrice. Willer (1886-1944), was the former partner of Charles Hansen in the firm Hansen and Willer earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but did this project on his own. Hansen and Willer were Danish immigrants, and were well-known for their stenciling and Art Nouveau painting techniques. Hansen and Willer decorated the Paddock Hotel and Paddock Opera House in Beatrice, and many other buildings and residences in the region. 11
- <u>Central Nebraska Millworks, Hastings</u>, a prominent company organized in 1911 and managed by ethnic Germans from Russia woodworkers, John K. Gettmann, his son and others. <sup>12</sup> The company did custom millwork for contractors and home builders in Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, and Kansas. <sup>13</sup>
- Thomas Gaytee Studios, Minneapolis produced the exquisite art glass windows. Thomas J. Gaytee founded the company in 1918 after studying in New York under Louis Comfort Tiffany. Gaytee first came to Minneapolis as a Tiffany salesman and then opened his own studio. The Gaytee Studio soon became known for the stained glass found in many churches in the region. The company is still in business operating as Gaytee-Palmer Stained Glass Studio and specializes in preservation projects. 14
- Reuter Organ Company, Lawrence, Kansas. This premier organ company built and installed the pipe organ. Centenary ordered the organ even before the architectural plans for the church were completed. <sup>15</sup>The company was established in Illinois in 1917 under the name Reuter-Schwartz Organ Company with the goal to "put out an organ second to none," The company relocated to Kansas in 1919 and Schwartz soon left the partnership. The company is still in operation as one of the country's leading pipe organ builders. <sup>16</sup>
- The <u>construction team</u> also included consulting decorator Fred Q. Hartsook, Des Moines, long-time interior decorator at the Younkers Department Store headquarters, who was later in private practice; Beatrice Brickworks, Forburger Stone Company, Lincoln, Johnson Hardware Company, Omaha, Ossit Brothers, Milwaukee, who made the pews, pulpits, altar furniture, and organ grills; local electricians, lighting experts, landscape designers, and plasterers, <sup>17</sup>

The very detailed and thoughtful Christian symbolism in the decor throughout the church is notable and inspirational. Especially designed art glass, and applied wood and plaster ornamentation are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> "Dedication Program of Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church," June 1, 1930.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Joni Gilkerson, "Charles Hansen and James Willer: Danish Interior Decorators, 1906-1915," *Nebraska History 67*, (1986), 102-114.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Joni Gilkerson, "Coleman House," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1982.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> "Mill Works Show Fast Development," Hastings Daily Tribune, October 20, 1921.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Dorothy Weyer Creigh. *Adams County: The People*. Hastings, Nebraska: Adams County-Hastings Centennial Commission, 1971.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> http:/gaytee-palmerstainedglass.com accessed October 25, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> "Dedication Program of Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church," June 1, 1930.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Reuter Organ Company, <u>www.reuterorgan.com</u>, accessed December 10, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> "Dedication Program of Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church," June 1, 1930.

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abundant throughout the building. Virtually every room, hallway, and other spaces have some symbolic décor. Images include the hand, various cross designs, the dove, the lamb, the distaff, vines and flowers, wheat and sickle, crown and scepter, and the images representing each apostle. The congregation formed a six-member committee to publish a booklet, complete with photographs, describing each image created for the new building. The publication also describes several artifacts and paintings that are mounted and on display.<sup>18</sup> The paintings in the church were a gift of Reverend McCaskill in memory of his wife, who unfortunately died before the church was completed.

Centenary's church school design plan is notable, and reflects a popular approach to Sunday school operation at the time. At first look, the Sunday school spaces appear to be similar to the 1870s Akron Plan for Sunday Schools whereby attendees could have the flexibility to come together in assembly spaces, but isolate via folding doors and curtains for class time. The Akron Plan was created by an Akron, Ohio Methodist minister, Reverend John Heyl Vincent, and his Sunday School Superintendent, Lewis Miller, who were also founders of the Chautauqua Institution in New York. While the Akron Plan continued to be part of church design plans into the 1920s and 1930s, Centenary's plan appears to closely follow a 1925, 32-page publication entitled *Building the Seven-Day-A-Week Church*, produced by the Department of City Works and Church Extension, and the Bureau of Architecture of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Other denominations, particularly the Baptists, offered books in the 1920s explaining how to design church school spaces and provide classroom and activity rooms. The concept was to grow membership in congregations by having children and young adults become accustomed to participating in various activities in church buildings.

The Methodist *Seven-Day-A-Week* book took Sunday school space organization to a higher level than the old Akron Plan that featured folding walls and curtains to adapt the spaces. The new church school plan, suggested in the book, advocated that there be solid walls and doors to define classrooms, ensuring that privacy and sound could be controlled. The arrangement of the Centenary Church Sunday school spaces, using the new Methodist guidelines of the time, was therefore an advanced, progressive technique.

The book told, in no uncertain terms, how to plan a vibrant Methodist church that could be used for all seven days of the week. The booklet referenced famed architect, Ralph Adams Cram, known for his impressive Gothic buildings, and cited his book, *Church Building, A Study of the Principles of Architecture in their Relation to the Church* when discussing the outward appearance and reverence the proper church building should possess. Centenary Church does reflect Cram's exterior Gothic preferences. The 1925 church-building booklet stressed that providing adequate Sunday school areas, and other gathering spaces for social groups and educational organizations, were of utmost importance in assuring a church building be a vibrant community space, and not simply stand vacant until Sundays. There were strict guidelines set out for the assembly spaces, Sunday school rooms, and more. Sample floor plans were included in the book.<sup>21</sup> It is likely that this book was utilized, due to Reverend McCaskill's design savvy and attention to details. The timing of the book's publication, just one year before Reverend McCaskill was assigned to Beatrice, also lay right at the time when the congregation was planning for their new church. It is possible there is a connection between these two events. Also important in this consideration is that church school was already important to the Centenary congregation, as reflected by Red Brick Church's addition that resulted in a total of 26 private Sunday

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Nelson, Mrs. Edward. "Centenary United Methodist Church, Beatrice, Nebraska," Symbolism and Art booklet, 1993.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Building the Seven- Day- a-Week Church. Philadelphia: Bureau of Architecture of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1925.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Burroughs, P.E. Building a Successful Sunday School, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Malcolm Dana, Building the Seven- Day- a-Week Church, July, 2010.

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school rooms in the older church.<sup>22</sup> The new church design therefore reaffirmed the congregation's commitment to education and fellowship activities.

As suggested in the 1925 book, the Centenary church school department was built with several assembly spaces and 41 small classrooms. The cradle room, preschool, and primary grades were on the lower level, and had access to a gathering space large enough for indoor games, and a stage for programs. This area actually did still utilize an Akron Plan style in that several small niches, with folding doors, lined the larger space.

Elementary and pre-teen age children had their assembly area and some classrooms on first floor, and had more classrooms and assembly areas on the atrium level directly above. Older children and high school-level grades found their classrooms and assembly room on second floor and behind the nave balcony. Over time, the age groups utilizing each classroom/assembly areas changed according to the needs of the congregation.

As part of the plan, each classroom door contained a service cabinet or (small pass-through door) so that Sunday school assistants could collect attendance cards and drawstring bags containing offering money, without disturbing the class.

The Centenary congregation did see large attendance numbers in their church school wing, and according to long-time church members who went to Sunday school as children and young adults in the 1940s and 1950s, all of the classrooms were utilized during that time. A large student population coupled with the separation of boys and girls in each age group lead to a high number of classrooms. Adults may have also attended Sunday school, further increasing the number of classrooms. <sup>23</sup> Centenary maintained a substantial Sunday school program for decades, well into the 1980s, which meant a good number of the classrooms were utilized deep into the building's existence.

While all of the rooms in Centenary Church were perhaps not used seven days each week, as the 1925 booklet suggested, various church, community, and scouting organizations did frequently use the building for meetings, special dinners, and social activities. Some organizations were short-lived, including a church school orchestra that was active from 1920-1935, but the variety in activities was apparent. Most events were generated and sponsored by the church, but other groups also used the building generating a certain sense of "community."

The Centenary Church project was planned and launched approximately one year before the stock market crashed in October 1929, but the congregation persevered and kept moving forward to complete construction. Fundraising and pledge campaigns had begun before the crash, and soon \$120,000 in bonds had been sold. Efforts however, were then stalled by the onset of the Great Depression and drought, and people could not make good on their pledges. The congregation, and other groups, rallied with grass-roots fund-raising projects that included bake sales, and sales of magazines, kitchen tools, Christmas cards, and more. The congregation's three Ladies' Circles also hired out to provide dinners and banquets for local organizations. Due to these persistent and arduous efforts, funds were finally secured to build the church, although it took 18 years before the mortgage was paid in full.<sup>24</sup>

Once the church was completed, the congregation planned a five-day-long series of public activities to celebrate the completion of the church that began with a formal dedication ceremony on Sunday morning, June 1, 1930. The *Beatrice Daily Sun* newspaper chronicled the events of dedication week. In addition to the special morning worship service on June 1, there were also afternoon and evening services on that day. Then, for the next four evenings, activities included #1) General Reception and Home Gathering, #2) Organ Recital and dedication of new organ, #3) Praise and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Joan Hall Davidson, Unpublished manuscripts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Interview with Joan Davison, Eleanor Quiring, and Betty Deats by Janet Jeffries, November 14, 2022.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Joan Hall Davidson, Unpublished timeline of Centenary Church.

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Thanksgiving Service, and #4) Public Reception for members of other churches, Beatrice citizens and people from the vicinity.<sup>25</sup> A 13-page dedication program was published for the series of events, including responsive readings for each of the services, a brief history of the congregation, listing of all people who were part of the construction team, and a schedule of events for the week.<sup>26</sup>

During the 1930s, soon after Centenary's completion, an important theological change took place resulting in the union of three Methodist churches in 1939. The Methodist Episcopal Church South, Methodist Protestant Church, and Methodist Episcopal Church then united. Centenary then dropped "Episcopal" from its name to become the Centenary United Methodist Church.<sup>27</sup>

Centenary United Methodist Church is a superb example of Late English Gothic Revival architecture in Nebraska. The building also exhibits outstanding ecclesiastical interior décor for the carefully thought-out decorative details and furnishings in the building. The church is comparable to just a few exceptional Late Gothic/Gothic Revival church buildings in the Nebraska. Examples include St. Mark's Episcopal Pro-Cathedral, Hastings, 1922, NRHP 1987; Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Omaha 1900, NRHP 1983; and St. Mary's Cathedral, Grand Island, 1926-28, NRHP 1982. The arrangement of the Centenary Church Sunday school spaces, using the new Methodist guidelines of the time, is also important, and demonstrates the forward-thinking, progressive system to encourage education and community outreach.

Members of the congregation worked tirelessly to see the church-building project to completion against serious financial odds, and all generations of Centenary Church members, over time, have done a remarkable job in preserving the historical legacy of their congregation, and the architectural integrity of the church.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Beatrice Daily Sun, June 1, 1930, p. 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> "Dedication Program of Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church," June 1, 1930.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Don W. Holter, Flames on the Plains, A History of United Methodism in Nebraska, Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1963.

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Name of Property                  | County and State       |

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| Previous documentation   |  |   | Primary location of additional data:   |  |  |  |  |
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| 10. Geographical   | Data   |   |  |  |  |  |  |
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# **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

# Centenary United Methodist Church

Gage County, Nebraska

#### **Name of Property**

#### **County and State**

- Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO for any additional items.)

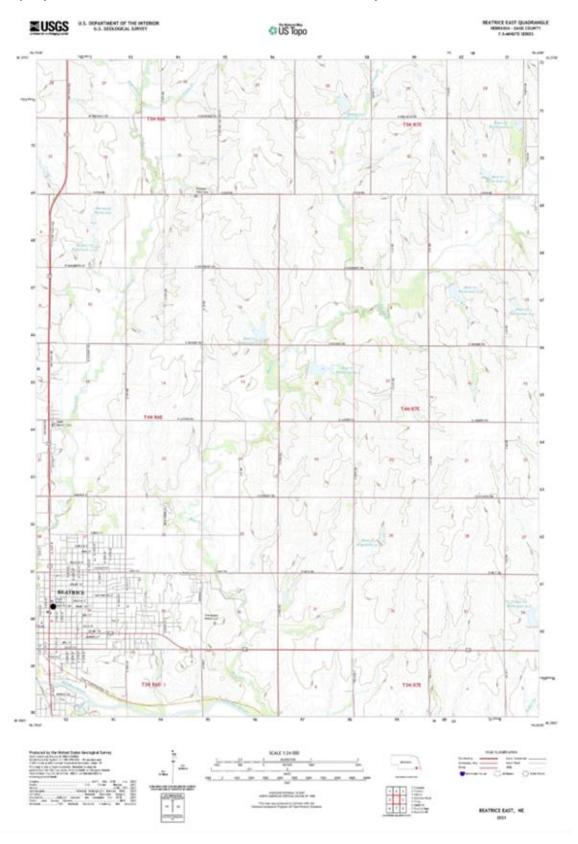


# Centenary United Methodist Church

# Gage County , Nebraska

Name of Property

# **County and State**



United States Department of the Interior

# National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018

Centenary United Methodist Church

Gage County, Nebraska

# Name of Property

# **County and State Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

#### **Photo Log**

| Name of Proper   | rty <b>Centenary United</b> | Inited Methodist Church |                   |        |             |  |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------|-------------|--|
| City or Vicinity | Beatrice                    | County <u>Gag</u>       | e                 | State  | Nebraska    |  |
| Photographer     | Joe van den Berg            |                         | Date Photographed | Octobe | er 25, 2022 |  |

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera.

- 1. North Façade, view south.
- 2. West façade with stained glass, view east.
- 3. West façade, view northeast.
- 4. South façade, view north.
- 5. East façade, view northwest.
- 6. Main nave with stained glass, view west.
- 7. Reverse view of nave with balcony, view east.
- 8. Intricate wood carvings on church pews, view north.
- 9. Choir seating on balcony above the alter, view west.
- 10. Reverse view of nave with balcony from choir seating, view east.
- Small parlor, view northwest. 11.
- 12. Cornerstone from the original Methodist church, view northeast.
- 13. View of bell and bell tower, view north.
- 14. Upper floor Sunday school classroom doors, view northeast.
- 15. Upper floor Sunday school classroom doors with pass-throughs, view northeast.
- Inside of a Sunday school classroom showing small size and scale, view east.

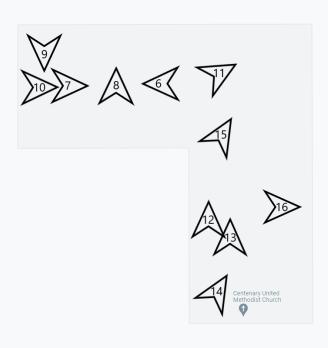


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Gage County, Nebraska

Name of Property

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement**: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.































