

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 an 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 St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Parochial School

other name/site number St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

2. Location

street & town 112 Walters Street not for publication: N/A

city or town Corning vicinity: N/A

state Missouri code MO county Holt code 087 zip code 64437

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Mark A. Miles Nov 14, 2007
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
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 the property is: | Signature of the Keeper | Date of Action |
| <input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet. | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet. | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register. | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register | _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other. (explain.) _____ | _____ | _____ |

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 2 | | buildings |
| | | sites |
| | | structures |
| | | objects |
| 2 | | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/church school

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

SOCIAL/meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY: Gothic Revival

OTHER: one-room schoolhouse

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls BRICK

roof METAL

ASPHALT

other WOOD

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

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 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.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: German

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1893-c.1940

Significant Dates

1893

1912

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Prof. Rev. John A.

Thull, Peter (builder)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: _____

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 1.5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 2/9/1/2/2/1 4/4/5/7/9/4/7
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

All of Lots 14 and 15 of Corning, Holt County, MO, Parcel Number 04-9-30-01-10-01.000.

Property Tax No. N/A

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These are the original property lines from the time of the church's construction.

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Seth Jenkins, Secretary for St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church Voters

organization Congregation of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church date 2/01/07

street & number 16119 Hwy. 48 telephone (816) 294-8539

city or town Rea state MO zip code 64480

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

name/title Congregation of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

street & number 112 Walters Street telephone (660) 683-5787

city or town Corning state MO zip code 64437

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Section number 7 Page 1 St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Parochial School
Holt County, MO

Narrative Description

Summary:

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 112 Walters Street, Corning, Holt County, MO, was built in 1893 with an addition constructed in 1953. It is Gothic Revival style with a cruciform design, complete with narthex, nave, transepts, and choir. Two steeples dominate its eastern (front) façade, each of which rises above a separate entrance. These steeples are composed of wood and metal, and the taller, southern steeple still houses the church's original bell. The roof itself is covered in asphalt shingles, which replaced the original metal sheeting. The interior of the church is dominated by the white, hand-carved altar-pulpit which rises approximately 24' above the main floor. A large canopy, adorned with a carved representation of heaven, is supported above the pulpit by half-columns with Corinthian capitals. All visible windows in the sanctuary are made of unique stained glass, and nearly all (with the exception of the rose or oculus window above the altar-pulpit and two windows in the organ/choir loft) are topped with pointed Gothic arches. The church itself faces Walters Street (explaining why it faces east rather than north like many traditional Gothic churches). Behind the church is the small one-room, wooden schoolhouse that once served as St. John's Parochial School. The interior of the school includes its original wood wainscoting and baseboard, wood flooring, wallpaper, lighting fixtures, desks, instructional maps, stove, and blackboard.

Exterior:

The walls of the exterior of the church are built of locally-kilned brick in a standard stretcher bond on a limestone foundation. There are three large stained glass windows on the north side and three on the south side of the sanctuary. Each rises from the first story to the second. There are also four medium-sized stained glass windows, two in the organ/choir loft and two on either side of the east door behind the altar-pulpit. There are also nine small stained glass windows, one in each narthex on the first floor, one on each end of the organ/choir loft above narthex windows, three in the east wall of the cry room, one in the sanctuary's west wall behind the altar-pulpit, and one in the sacristy. Aside from these, there are also two large, one-story windows in the organ/choir loft (the only ones in the sanctuary without pointed arches at the top), a pointed transom above the west door behind the altar-pulpit, and a round rose or oculus window above the altar-pulpit. Each of these stained glass windows is set in a wooden frame painted white on the exterior. The small and medium-sized windows are largely geometric in design. Above the geometric designs in the top of each of the medium-sized windows is a form of Latin cross. The oculus window depicts the Sacrament of Holy Communion with the images of a chalice, communion wafers, grapes, and wheat.

The large windows are the most illustrative, depicting three to seven symbols

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each, including a large main symbol at the top. The St. Mary window of the north transept may be so called because the crowning image, a winged heart pierced by a sword, is a symbol of the Virgin Mary (as taken from Luke 1:26-38; 2:19 and 35). Below this main symbol are six separate compartments that house another smaller symbol. On the left, they are the scroll (symbolic of the Pentateuch), the oil lamp (representing the Word of God as described in Psalms 119:105), and the temple (representing Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem). On the right, they are the Episcopal staff or crosier (symbolic of pastoral office of the ministry), the Hands of God (signifying divine care for the souls of the righteous), and the basin and towel (taken from John 13:5 and representing the humility of Christ, who washed the feet of his disciples). The St. John window of the south transept may be so called because the crowning image, an eagle with outstretched wings in a cauldron, represents the Gospel and persecution of the church's namesake, St. John the Apostle and Evangelist. This window also houses six smaller images. On the left, they are the crown (symbolizing Christ as King), the throne (symbolizing Christ as Prophet), and the vestments (priestly garments representing Christ as Priest). On the right, they are the cup (representing the cup of suffering), the crown of thorns (a symbol of Christ's suffering from Mark 15:17), and the Christogram. The latter is one of the most interesting symbols in the church. Rather than depicting the typical IHS Christogram commonly found in Western Christianity, this window utilizes the more Eastern letter pairs IC, XC, NI, and KA fixed around a Greek cross. ICXC is an abbreviation of the name Jesus Christ in Greek (IHΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, transliterated as IHCOYC XPICTOC or JESOUS CRISTOS), while NIKA is the Greek word for "conquers." Thus this symbol represents Christ's victory over death and the power of Satan.

The Saints window in the center of the north wall bears a vine with thirteen shields hung in it. The largest and uppermost shield bears the IHS Christogram and the remaining twelve each bear a symbol of one of the Twelve Apostles (representing Christ as the vine and his Church as the branches from John 15:5). The four smaller symbols on this window are representative of Martin Luther and his Proto-Protestant reforming predecessors. They include the Luther rose (a rose with a heart and cross in the center, personally designed by Martin Luther to be his coat of arms) and the star and sun of 1384 (a symbol of John Wycliffe, called the Morning Star of the Reformation in England and who died in 1384) on the left side of the window and the skull and stem sprouting from a flower (representing the 15th century Italian reformer Girolamo Savonarola) and the goose and phoenix (representing the Bohemian reformer John Hus) on the right. Opposite the Saints window on the south wall is the Scripture window, depicting an open Bible at the top. Below it are a censer (symbolic of prayer) on the left and a sheet of music (depicting the first few notes of Martin Luther's Reformation hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God") on the right.

The Old Testament window, located in northeast corner of the nave, depicts the Ark of the Covenant at the top and the Tablets of the Ten Commandments and the Altar

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Sacrifice (all of which are symbols of the Israelites and their worship from Genesis and Exodus) below. Opposite the Old Testament Window on the south wall is the Ship window, so called because of the large ship at the top, which represents the heavenward voyage and the reference to the disciples as "fishers of men." Below the ship are the dove and baptismal font (representing the Sacrament of Holy Baptism) on the left and the Chalice and IHS Christogram (representing the Sacrament of Holy Communion) on the right. Nearly all of the windows also bear the name or names of the member(s) who donated money for their purchase in 1943. These names are located in a special compartment at the bottom of each window.¹

Finally, the roof of the building is covered in asphalt shingles, which replaced the earlier tin roof, one of only a handful of changes to the exterior. Towering above the roof are two steeples made of a combination of metal and wood.

The church exterior has undergone very little change since the time of its completion. One such minor change occurred in the transom of each entrance, which at one time had three conjoined circles, symbolizing the Holy Trinity, painted on them. These symbols, however, were painted over for unknown reasons with white paint during one of the many repainting projects. Another change to the façade occurred in the late 1930s, when American fears of another war with Germany prompted the members to remove the original German lettering across the front of the church, eventually replacing it with English. On a slightly larger scale, a small furnace house was added in the 1940s, being tacked onto the northwestern corner in order to protect the architectural design of original structure. This room does not impose on the original design, being built of a similar kind and bond of brick and standing flush against an already windowless wall.

Perhaps the most significant change to the exterior was the 1953 addition of the Parish Hall. The hall is located at the southwest corner of the church and is one-story with side gable roof. The windows are multi-pane with metal sashes. A small gable roof porch is located over the entrance. Though the bricks of the Parish Hall are slightly different texturally, they are the same color and are laid with the same stretcher bond as the historic church building. In order to cause as little damage to the structure's historic and aesthetic integrity as possible, it was added to the southwest corner of the sanctuary where the only change to the main structure was the cutting of a door into an unused wall. This door now leads directly into the main area of the hall, originally designed to be an auditorium and dining hall. The hall also contains two bathrooms, a kitchen, two classrooms, a second furnace room, and a stage now converted into two additional classrooms.

The structure's exterior is currently in good but not pristine condition. Recent high winds damaged the roof, blowing off several shingles and requiring replacement.

¹ St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. *A Centennial Celebration and Rededication of the Sanctuary 1893-1994*.
Corning, MO: privately printed, 1994.

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Currently, the church is exploring options, including a return to more historically consistent metal sheeting. The southern steeple also sustained damage, including the loss of one of the four small spires and damage to the wood that forms the bell housing. All repairs, however, are pending final plans, contracting, and the availability of funds.

As for landscaping, all of the evergreen trees that once stood in front of and beside the church died during the Flood of 1993 and were cut down. Now, only a small grove of deciduous trees stands behind the church and Parish Hall around the Schoolhouse. Sidewalks run in front of the church along the street and to the Parish Hall door, and the driveway encircles the main building.

Interior:

The interior of the structure also has walls constructed of brick, being separated by the outer wall by a small empty space. These walls were wallpapered in a very light blue during the restoration after the Flood of 1993. Three original murals depicting Jesus, the Good Shepherd from John 10:11-18, Jesus at the Sea of Galilee from Mark 3:7-11, and the City of God from Revelation 21 (which, being located behind the altar-pulpit, is designed to accompany its depiction of heaven) were painted by Alfred Nestler in the 1920s, before he moved to Arizona to become a professional artist.² The ceiling is constructed of pressed tin, formed into an intricate pattern and painted white. The original ceiling color was white with gold trim, but the expansion and contraction of the metal from temperature fluctuations over the years eventually required the use of more modern, durable paint. The nave or main sanctuary of the building is a large open area 30' running south and north and 35' to the altar steps. This area contains approximately twenty, ten-foot, hand carved, movable pews built from dark wood imported from Germany that matches the wood of the doors, the window frames, the loft railing, the organ, the organ/choir loft columns, and of the sacristy (a small room measuring 8' x 7' in the northwest corner of the sanctuary).

As previously mentioned, the most unique and central feature of the church's interior is the towering, white and gold painted altar-pulpit at the west end, designed (along with the moveable and matching baptismal font) by J. A. Proft the same year as the building's construction. The altar portion of this structure is located atop a three-step, tiered platform rising 3' above the main floor. The pulpit portion is located behind it, rising 8' above the floor. Above this, the altar-pulpit is topped by a hand-carved, wooden canopy, standing as a single constructed piece designed to be a representation of heaven (especially as it is described in Revelation 21). The half-columns with Corinthian capitals that support the canopy once had gas lights attached to them, but they were removed (due largely to their risk as fire hazards) after the installation of electricity. Behind the altar-pulpit, in the west wall of the sanctuary, is a third, smaller door leading to the exterior of the church.

² Ibid.

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The narthex, located at the other end of the church, is divided into two parts. The male entrance opens into the South Narthex, which leads into both the sanctuary and into a separate corridor that houses the stairs to the organ/choir loft. This corridor, which also accesses the sanctuary with a separate door, serves as a nursery (or cry room) with windows that allow viewing of the service and contains the garment racks, the original iron coat hooks, and an antique rocking chair. The female entrance opens into the North Narthex, which leads directly into the sanctuary.

The organ/choir loft, located above the Narthex, boasts not only two four-sided columns with Corinthian capitals similar in adornment to those on the altar-pulpit, but also the original, hand-stenciled 1893 Kilgen pipe organ in the center. After remaining in unaltered working condition for an entire century, it was discovered in 1993 that delicate Dulciana pipes within the organ had collapsed due to one hundred years of temperature fluctuation in the un-air-conditioned building. It was also discovered that these pipes, usually constructed entirely of tin, had been partially built with lead as a substitute due to the short supply of tin at the time of their construction, compromising their durability. The Quimby Pipe Organ Company replaced the faulty pipes with a set constructed in 1900, making this the only change to the original organ in over a century (not including the addition—not alteration—of an electric pump to make hand-pumping the organ unnecessary).

Another important yet relatively new feature of the church's interior is the previously mentioned leaded stained glass, installed in 1943 (for the building's 50th anniversary) by a St. Joseph, MO glass artisan (either St. Joseph Art Glass established by Paul Wolff in 1889 or the Tobias Studios established sometime soon after). The unique blue glass which makes up the majority of each window came from Czechoslovakia, the only place in the world where it was obtainable at that time (at the height of World War II). Each window, especially the six main 6' x 8' windows of the nave, contains religious and historical symbols as well as the names of the person or family who contributed the funds for the window's purchase. The main windows of the nave as well as the main windows of the loft are double hung in the lower section with the upper portion forming a Gothic pointed arch (with the exception of the two previously-mentioned rounded windows in the choir/organ loft).³

Like the exterior, the interior has also undergone very few changes. In the years that followed the 1952 flood, the sanctuary floor began to sag and warp necessitating its replacement with particleboard and carpet in the 1980s. In 1993, yet another flood caused damage to the carpet and wallpaper, and both were replaced. The pews were sanded and stained to remove old varnish and water line marks left by flood waters. Older features like the oil furnace and gas lights have also been upgraded to a gas furnace and electric light fixtures and ceiling fans (due to the fact that the church still has no air conditioning).

³ Ibid.

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Schoolhouse:

To the west, across the driveway that surrounds the church, sits the wooden, one-room schoolhouse. This small white building with an asphalt-shingled front-gable roof sits elevated approximately two feet on a limestone foundation. There is a single door in the north end of the building and three single-hung sash windows on the east and three on the west wall. Due to a half-century of disuse, the building is in disrepair. However, due to a recent (2006) cleaning project, it was discovered that most of the original features and furniture still remained in the schoolhouse. Some of these features were in only minor disrepair, including a set of turn-of-the-century pull-down world maps (8 in all) in their original wooden case attached to the blackboard. On the blackboard itself, names of students who attended Sunday school there more than fifty years ago are still visible. Today, this building is in need of some major repair, especially to the interior walls, floors, and ceilings (all of which received water damage in the floods of 1952 and 1993), but it is by no means unsalvageable.

Integrity:

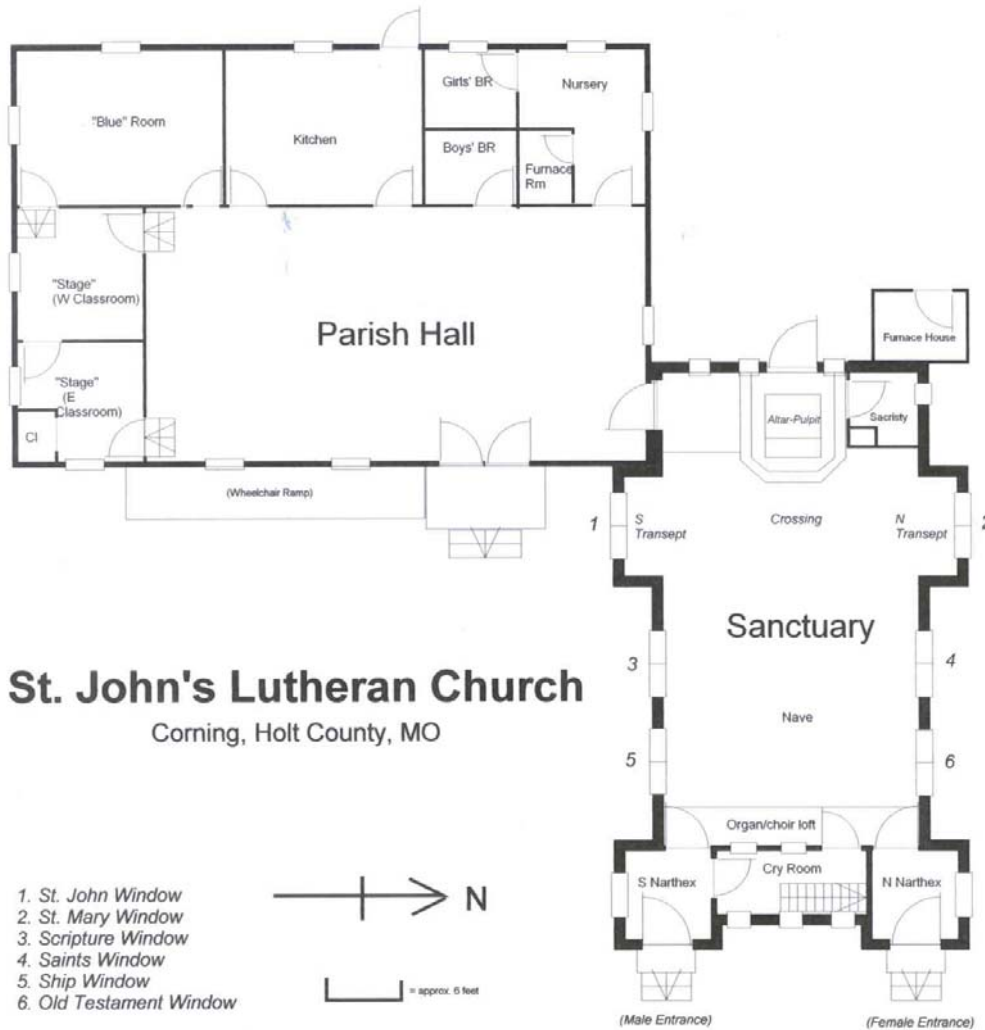
Despite some need for repair, the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Parochial School retain their important architectural characteristics and convey their ethnic and architectural significance. The 1950s addition to the church is large and alters the overall footprint of the building. However, the addition is only connected at one rear corner of the building and does not significantly impact the important architectural features of the church on the interior or exterior. The school building has not changed significantly since its construction in 1912 and conveys its significance to the German culture in and around Corning, Holt County, Missouri.

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Site and Floor Plan



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Architect/Builder *(continued)*

Schultz, Glen
Schultz, Byron
Schultz, RE
Nestler, Alfred

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary:

The St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Parochial School, 112 Walters St., Corning, Holt County, is locally significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of ETHNIC HERITAGE: GERMAN, and ARCHITECTURE. Constructed in 1893, the Gothic Revival style church was designed by Rev. John A. Proft in a Latin Cross plan. The style and plan were reflective of the churches in Hanover from whence many of the congregants came in the mid-to-late 19th Century. St. John's survives as an example of the impact of Gothic Revival style even on the smallest and most removed religious buildings of the period. This second building to house St. John's Church continued the tradition of the previous buildings, and became a social and educational center for the community as well as a place to worship. The church helped to preserve German culture by holding services in German and teaching German language at the parochial school into the 20th Century. The period of significance for the property is 1893, the date of construction of the church, through c. 1940, when the church abandoned German-language services. Despite damage from major floods in 1952 and 1993, the church is well preserved and maintains the architectural features that convey its historic and architectural significance.

Elaboration:

Records dating from approximately 1841 indicate that thousands of German immigrants, most of them Lutheran, came to America and settled in the Missouri River plains area during the mid to late 19th century. So many came to northwest Holt County that the local English-speaking community referred to the area around the town of Corning and Lincoln Township as "Little Germany." The founders of the St. John's Congregation in particular came mostly from the Kingdom of Hanover in the 1840s and 1850s in order to avoid the looming unification of their kingdom with Prussia (1866), which threatened to merge their more conservative Lutheran church with the Calvinist-influenced Prussian Evangelical Church. Most of the emigrants to the area around Corning were farmers, who sought the virgin soil of the Missouri River valley, an improvement from the flat, sandy soil of their native Hanover. Many were also carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, and merchants, providing an adequate basis for a

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proper settlement.⁴

In 1844, Henry Hemme founded a trading post that soon became known as Hemme's Landing just a half-mile from Corning, MO. Lutheran residents, who had begun worshiping in their homes as early as 1852, soon began focusing on the establishment of a permanent congregation and church. By the spring of 1860, community leaders had formed Deutsch Evangelish Lutheraner St. Johannes (St. John's Evangelical German-Lutheran) Congregation and constructed their first church structure. This first St. John's Lutheran Church, also known as the "Church in the Timber," was dedicated in October 1860.⁵ It became the site of Sunday worship services and weekday parochial school classes that taught subjects varying from Lutheran doctrine to general subjects like German and English language several years before many public schools opened in the area.

Though German-Lutherans came to the United States to preserve their religious beliefs, they were also dedicated to the ideals of education and patriotism. Soon, however, their loyalty to their new nation was tested when they were asked to fight in the Civil War. Most of these immigrants were anti-slavery (a dangerous position in the largely pro-South state) and many men from the community served in the Union Army. The community was fortunate, however, and suffered no armed attacks from the pro-Confederate "Bushwhackers." Other German-Lutheran communities like St. Paul's congregation of Concordia, MO were not so fortunate, and lost several communicants in just such an attack. Having avoided attack, the German community of Corning continued to grow, due largely to affordable land being sold by southern sympathizers who were leaving the area and the continuing pressures of German unification on Hanoverians in the homeland.⁶

After the completion of the St. Joseph & Council Bluffs Railroad in 1868, the population of Lincoln Township began to shift toward Corning, which had sprung up on this route. The arrival of the railroad and the meandering Missouri River, which threatened to destroy Hemme's Landing, caused the church elders to move the wooden structure to the "more enduring location" of Corning. This move brought a new wave of prosperity to the town, as German craftsmen opened new businesses and German farmers started shipping a record number of livestock on the river and new rail system. This prosperity led to the construction of a parsonage for the congregation's new full-time minister and the formal establishment of a parochial school for German and Lutheran instruction. In fact, there were so many Germans in Corning at this time that an 1877 article in the *Holt County Sentinel* stated that speaking German was a necessity for doing business there. The influx of German immigrants continued, spilling into an area known as Marietta in Union Township to the south. Within a short amount

⁴ Michael Jenkins. *The German-Lutherans of Holt County: The Survival of an Old Lutheran Community in Northwest Missouri*. Maryville, MO: Northwest Missouri State University, 2003. 16-17.

⁵ *Centennial*.

⁶ Jenkins, 15-16.

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of time, there were enough German Lutherans in this area to open yet another Lutheran church and parochial school in the county.

By the 1880s and 1890s, Holt County held the largest German-Lutheran community in northwest Missouri, with up to three percent of the County's population. St. John's Lutheran Church in Corning had a membership of more than three hundred, and the parochial school had over fifty students in attendance. German-Lutherans comprised the majority of Corning's population and many of St. John's congregants were business leaders in the community. Church members were credited with building the grain elevator (which still stands in Corning today), starting the People's Bank of Corning and the Corning Butter and Cheese Factory, owning a stable of expensive European horses, and holding the important office of postmaster.

Being well-established in their own community, these Holt County Lutherans soon began extending their ministry to other German communities in northwest Missouri, helping to start congregations in St. Joseph to the south and Fairfax to the north. They also established formal ties with other Lutherans in the nation by joining the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (a conservative synod created by other "Old Lutherans" who had left Saxony to settle near St. Louis for some of the same reasons that the Hanoverians of St. John's Congregation had) in 1885. With this union, the German-Lutherans of Holt County were officially part of the largest Lutheran denomination in the nation.⁷

In 1893, at the height of German-Lutheran prosperity in northern Holt County, church members decided that the original wooden "Church in the Timber" structure had become too small. That year, the current St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Corning was built by Peter Thull of Rock Port, MO. Its designer, a first generation German immigrant named Reverend John A. Proft, created plans with an obvious Gothic influence, reminiscent of the cathedrals he and his congregation had left behind in Europe. The plan used traditionally Gothic pointed arch windows, a cruciform (Latin Cross) design, and intricate details in the ceiling and altar-pulpit despite the fact that Gothic Revival as a movement was becoming less prominent in the nation as a whole. Proft also added several unique touches to the building that made it stand out among other buildings of its type, style, and period, including the use of locally-killed brick rather than stone or wood. On the interior, he ignored the common practice of building an altar, a lectern, and a pulpit as separate structures, deciding instead to combine the three pieces with three specific uses into one massive, unique structure. Perhaps the most unique feature of the building is the utilization of two separate entrances with specific functions.

⁷ Ibid., 22-24.

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Holt County, MO



Figure 1: Historic photograph (taken around 1894), shortly after St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church was constructed, showing the relocated "Church in the Timber" behind it.

The two steeples of different heights on the eastern façade were designed to hold significance for the entrances they stand above. The taller of the two steeples, which houses the church's original bell, is topped by a red eight-sided spire surrounded by four smaller spires and is crowned with a wooden, four-sided cross. This, the highest point of the building, rises above the south or "male" entrance," originally intended to be used only by the men of the congregation. The significantly smaller steeple, which resembles a red, spire-topped pyramid supported by four smaller columns, rises above the north or "female" entrance, originally intended for use by the women and children of the congregation who sat on this side of the church. In this way, Proft intended for the architectural design of the building to reflect the congregation's belief that men, as heads of their respective households, were responsible for the spiritual upbringing of their families and required a separate place from which they could better focus on the message of the worship service. This practice of male-female separation during the church service continued among some members even into the early to mid-20th century.

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A full Kilgen pipe organ was purchased in 1899 to fill the large new structure with music (which was and is very important to Lutheran worship), and German spruce was imported from Germany to build the church's pews (which remain in use today). The church was truly extravagant, especially when considering that it was built almost entirely with the funds and labor of first generation immigrants. Yet, this prosperity that had gradually built up over the course of the 19th century would soon begin unraveling with the advent of the 20th.⁸

The steady flow of immigrants to the area soon lessened, and the German-Lutheran community's population leveled-off. German-Lutheran youths found it harder to find suitable German-Lutheran spouses and started marrying into the English-speaking communities to the north and south. Minor social arguments, feuds, and bickering, which had led to the establishment of a German Reformed Church in 1878, began impacting St. John's membership (though it never reached the level of membership or enjoyed the prosperity the St. John's once did). By 1903, the trend was evident, as the membership at St. John's Lutheran Church fell to two hundred and fifty. Yet, the congregation continued to fight this decline, contracting R. E. Schultz of Corning to construct a new schoolhouse for the parochial school (which was being held in the former Church in the Timber structure) in 1912 despite slipping attendance. English classes were added to the curriculum, but it was still considered the "German School" by local residents.

Perhaps the most significant blows to the German-Lutheran culture in the area were the World Wars. As their former homeland became the enemy of their new nation, the Germans of Holt County began receiving pressure to abandon their native language. Due to this pressure, St. Peter Lutheran church in Union Township agreed to end their practice of holding services in German alone and to adopt English as the only language of their parochial school in 1918. Though St. John's avoided the abandonment of their German language (due largely to the fact that it existed in a more heavily German area than St. Peter did) for another twenty years, they still lost St. John's Parochial School in 1917. The schoolhouse continued to be used for Sunday School classes for years to come, and stands to this day as a monument to the last great effort of the German-Lutheran community to preserve German education.

⁸ Ibid., 26.

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Figure 2: Historic photograph (taken about 1950), showing a Sunday School class in the doorway of the schoolhouse

St. John's Lutheran Church may have preserved their language for the time being, but this only led to a further decline in the church's membership (due largely to the fact that the language was no longer taught after the close of the parochial school). The Great Depression saw a major disruption in Corning's once-booming economy, and thus more decline in the church's membership. The German language finally died in "Little Germany" with the onset of the Second World War. Pressure to abandon and/or disguise their German heritage hit an all-time high when vandals painted a Nazi swastika on the church's door. Whether or not this was the event that finally ended German services at the church is unclear. However, it was around this same time that the letters on the front of the church that read "Ev. Luth. St. Johannes Kirche" were

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removed.⁹ (Eventually the German would be replaced with letters that simply read "St. John's" in the 1980s. It is speculated that the "s" at the end of the church's name was retained unintentionally by former German speakers who were used to pronouncing the name "Johannes.")

Despite some fears, the loss of the German language in these Lutheran churches was not the end of their existence. In fact, the intermarrying of the German and English communities to the south of Corning led to the growth of St. Peter and eventually to the establishment of the third Lutheran church in Holt County further south in Mound City. The decline in membership continued, but at a much slower rate after it became acceptable for the German-Lutherans of Lincoln Township to marry into the nearby English-speaking populace.¹⁰

In 1952, St. John's Lutheran Church faced a catastrophe that could have destroyed the congregation permanently. That year, a major flood damaged the building. However, not only did the congregation completely repair and restore the sanctuary, but it also added a Parish Hall the next year. This addition signified a major investment in the future of the church and exemplified the dedication of the St. John's congregation to the preservation of the faith of their German forefathers and the building they left behind. An even more catastrophic flood hit the church in 1993, and yet again the congregation banded together to repair and restore the facility to its former condition. Currently, projects have been initiated to restore and preserve the church's deteriorating steeple and schoolhouse. As descendants of the hardworking immigrants who found prosperity in America and built a community once known as "Little Germany," the current congregation understands the importance of both the church and the schoolhouse. Hemme's Landing, the Church in the Timber, and the businesses and once-grand houses of Corning are all gone, while these two buildings stand as the *only* remaining monuments to a nearly-forgotten era and its unique culture.

⁹ Ibid., 26-29.

¹⁰ Ibid., 29-30.

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Figure 3: Historic photograph taken in April, 1952 during the Flood of 1952



Figure 4: Historic photograph taken July 25, during the Flood of 1993

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Holt County, MO

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The following is true for all photographs:

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and Parochial School

Holt County, Missouri

Photographer: Seth Jenkins

Date: February 2007

Location of Negatives: with photographer

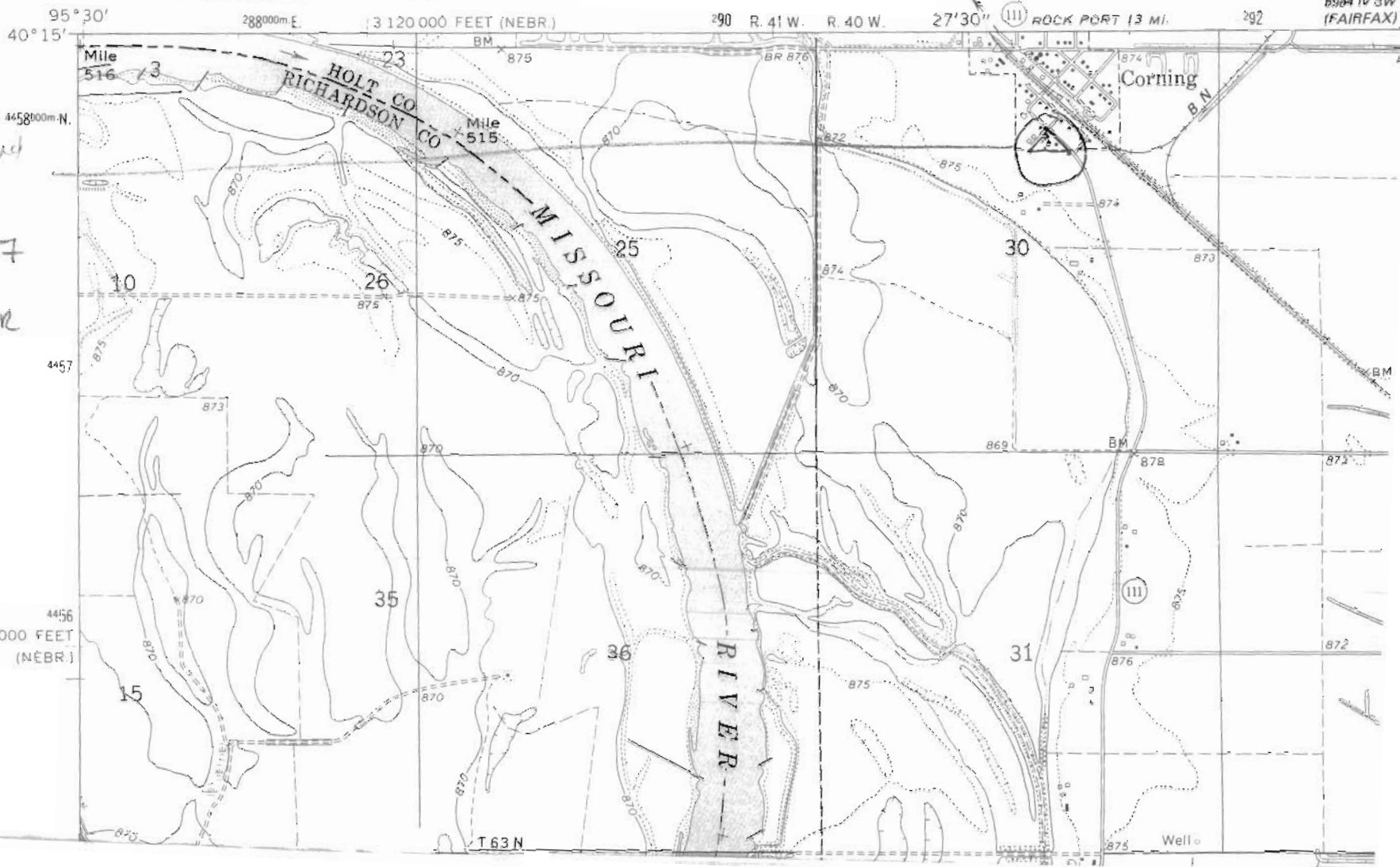
Photos:

1. St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church exterior with St. John's Parochial School behind it, as seen from the northeast
2. St. John's façade with the Parish Hall addition to the left, as seen from Walters Street to the east
3. St. John's and the Parish Hall addition, as seen from the southeast
4. St. John's Parochial School, as seen from the northeast
5. St. John's Parochial School (foreground) and the rear of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church with the furnace house addition in the lower left, as seen from the northwest
6. Sanctuary interior, showing the altar-pulpit, as seen from the southern (male) entrance
7. Sanctuary interior, showing the altar-pulpit, as seen from the northern (female) entrance
8. Altar-pulpit columns in detail
9. Organ/choir loft above the narthex and cry room, as seen from the altar-pulpit to the west
10. Organ/choir loft, as seen from the west
11. Organ/choir loft, as seen from the southwest
12. 1893 Kilgen pipe organ in detail, as seen from the north end of the organ/choir loft
13. 1893 Kilgen pipe organ hand-stenciling in detail
14. Bell ropes below the southern steeple, as seen from the north in the organ/choir loft (the window is a small example of the stained glass found throughout the church)
15. Nave or main sanctuary with the hand carved, movable pews, as seen from the northwest
16. Center Mural detail: The City of God (right portion only) from Revelation 21
17. Southern Mural detail: Jesus, the Good Shepherd from John 10:11-18
18. Northern Mural detail: Jesus at the Sea of Galilee from Mark 3:7-11
19. Schoolhouse interior, with original stove, desks, chalkboards, and roll-down maps (found in the wooden case above the chalkboard in the upper left), as seen from the north
20. Turn-of-the-century roll-down maps in detail

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John's Evangelical
Lutheran Church and
Parochial School
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RECTOR OF
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