## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
### INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

**NAME**

Pilgrim Holiness Church

**LOCATION**

Arthur

**CLASSIFICATION**

- **CATEGORY**: District, Building(s), Site, Object
- **OWNERSHIP**: Public, Private, Both
- **STATUS**: Occupied, Unoccupied, Work in Progress, Accessible
- **PRESENT USE**: Agriculture, Museum, Commercial, Park, Educational, Religious, Entertainment, Government, Industrial, Scientific, Transportation, Military, Other

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

Arthur County Historical Society

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

County Clerks Office, Arthur County Courthouse

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

Historic Preservation in Nebraska

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>STATE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**

Nebraska State Historical Society

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

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

The Arthur County Historical Society owns the building and completed some restoration work on the exterior in 1976 with the assistance of a grant from the Nebraska Bicentennial Commission. A new wooden roof was laid and the exterior was re-stuccoed and painted.
The Pilgrim Holiness Church represents a significant folk architectural response to the vast Nebraska Sandhills environment—a distinct, semi-arid ecology of sand dunes stabilized by grass cover and characterized by the almost total lack of traditionally suitable building materials. While materials were available locally throughout the region for sod construction, the ecology in a general sense was not suitable for its use. In the words of Roger Welsch (1970, p. 17), the Sandhills

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

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

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

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

See continuation sheet

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Arthur

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:62500

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
A 1 4 2 1 5 8 1 5 0 4 6 0 5 4 0 0

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE Code COUNTY Code

FORM PREPARED BY

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

ORGANIZATION
Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE
May, 1979

STREET & NUMBER
1500 R Street

TELEPHONE
402/471-3270

CITY OR TOWN
Lincoln

STATE
Nebraska

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X LOCAL ___

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE 5/3/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION
Arthur County Historical Society, informants, Arthur, Nebraska

Monhart, Joe, informant, Arthur, Nebraska, 1978


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

Photo 1 – south & east facades
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/8:24)
Photo 2 – south facade
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/8:21)
Photo 4 – north and east facades
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/9:20)
Photo 5 – interior looking north
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/8:34)
Photo 6 – interior looking south toward vestibule
Photo by Janet Jeffries Spencer, 1978, NSHS (7809/8:37)