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National Park Service

AUG 24 1987

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1204, 1213, 1214, 1215 S. 8th Street N/A not for publication

city, town Milwaukee vicinity N/A

state WI code WI county Milw. code 079 zip code 53204

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>4</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<u>4</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

No. of contributing resources  
previously listed in the  
National Register 0



7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
Gothic	foundation Limestone
Italianate	walls Brick
Other: Front Gabled	roof Asbestos
Late Victorian	other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Description

St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church complex is located just to the west and south of Milwaukee's Walker's Point area, a major settlement of early Milwaukee. The complex is located approximately two miles south of the city's central business district. Located in a mid-to-late-nineteenth-century working-class neighborhood, the complex consists of a church building, parsonage, school and social hall. All were built in the late nineteenth century. The surrounding neighborhood was built during the same era as the church complex. The complex is sited on the southeast and southwest corners of Eighth and Scott streets with the church and parsonage on the west side of South Eighth Street and the school and social hall directly across from them on the east side of South Eighth Street.

Church

The church is located on the southwest corner of South Eighth and West Scott Streets. It is a gabled, cream brick, Victorian Gothic style, cruciform structure with shallow gabled transepts and square towers of differing heights flanking the central entrance on the facade. The building is about 70 feet wide and 76 feet long. It rests on a rusticated limestone plinth and is trimmed with dressed limestone and extensive ornamental brickwork and sheet metal. Andrew Elleson, a Milwaukeean, was the architect and the cornerstone is dated 1885. The church was dedicated March 22, 1886.

The gabled facade facing South Eighth Street is composed of a projecting gabled brick porch flanked by two corner towers, one being much taller than the other (165 feet vs. 100 feet). The larger square tower that dominates the southwest corner of South Eighth and West Scott streets consists of four stages topped by an octagonal spire rising from a boldly pedimented cross-gabled roof. The shorter south tower consists of three stages topped by a pyramidal slate roof pierced by large triangular ventilators. The peaks of both towers and the church roof gable between them are topped with large metal crosses. The arched openings on the facade have an unusual stylistic progression. The sharply pointed Gothic arches found on the first floor fenestration give way to broad almost segmental pointed arches at the second

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level that serve as the transition to the round arch belfry openings in the tower and circular attic windows. Window openings on all of the elevations are simply framed with a brick stretcher band trimmed with limestone keystones. Brick corbel friezes are found at the eaves and as belt courses defining some of the floor levels on the towers.

The north and south elevations are similar to each other in design with a gabled transept being the central feature of each. Like the facade gable, the transepts are prominently flashed with an ornamental sheet metal coping. The fenestration consists of regularly spaced, tall, narrow, pointed arched stained glass windows. A circular stained glass window is centered in each transept gable.

The principal feature of the plain west elevation is the square apse.

The church is entered by means of two, separate, small, square, vestibules. One is located off the main center entrance and the other is in the base of the north tower and contains a staircase to the gallery. A narthex, which contains another staircase to the gallery, connects the entrances and buffers them from the nave. Pews in the nave are arranged on either side of a wide center aisle and two narrower side aisles. Several rows of pews in the transepts are placed at right angles to the nave pews. A semi-octagonal apse is located at the front of the church.

The interior reflects Gothic, Victorian and eighteenth century German design influences. The nave is T-shaped in plan, like many medieval churches, and has a large U-shaped balcony that terminates at the transepts. Eighteenth century Protestant churches in Germany often had one or more tiers of U-shaped balconies. A large pipe organ fills the rear of the balcony. The nave ceiling features ribbed, four-part plaster vaults that span the central portion of the nave. Square piers in a strikingly original Victorian design support the side galleries and also support the nave vaults. The lower flat ceilings in the transepts and at the sides of the nave above the galleries are not derived from Gothic models and probably reflect an eighteenth century German innovation. This ceiling treatment is not seen in any other Milwaukee Church.

The tall, niche-like apse is unusual for its shallowness and features an antique white wood reredos of a Gothic design. To the left of the apse is a goblet-shaped, white, Gothic-style pulpit with the speaker's platform elevated about six feet above the nave floor. A concealed staircase located behind the pulpit provides access.

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The interior is in nearly original condition and has recently been sensitively redecorated. St. Peter's has been spared the sweeping changes that have marred many other nineteenth century churches, but a few modifications have been made. The Gothic style sounding board over the raised pulpit has been removed and two statues have been removed from the reredos. A wall was constructed under the balcony--in a very sensitive fashion--to create a narthex and cry room. All other details, such as staircases to the balcony wainscoting and pews are original. The entire building shows pride in ownership and respect for its historic character.

Parsonage

The parsonage is located at 1215 South Eighth Street, directly south of the church. It is a wood frame, two story, L-shaped, gable-roofed building erected in 1873 in a simplified Italianate style. The main elevation of the house faces South Eighth Street. It is a simply composed gabled block with three bays of tall narrow sash windows. The principal ornamental feature of the house is the Tuscan columned porch that extends completely across the first story and shelters the front door. This porch was a turn-of-the-century replacement for an earlier porch. An ocular window was originally centered in the gable. The other elevations are utilitarian in character with simple windows of varying types and sizes placed to respond to floor plan requirements.

Remodeling has altered the original appearance. Wide aluminum siding covers the original clapboards. A chimney has been removed and the ocular window centered in the facade gable has been covered over. All of the original ornament, such as the porch balusters, parapet balustrade and gable brackets, has been removed or replaced with modern substitutes. The building is now used for church offices.

School

The school building is located across the street from the church on the southeast corner of South Eighth and West Scott streets. It is a two-story, gabled, hip-roofed, cream brick, Italianate style structure built in 1879. It measures approximately 40'x 75' and rests on a rusticated limestone plinth. John Rugee was the architect. The five-bay wide facade faces South Eighth Street and is symmetrically composed around a projecting gabled central pavilion. Segmental arches top the window openings and entrance portal. The windows are glazed with six-over-six, double hung sash. The brick hood molds around the windows, the brick corner pilasters, the wide molded eaves and the brick corbelling are also Italianate features.

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The identical side elevations on the north and south are compressed versions of the facade. Each has a central gabled pavilion flanked by one bay of fenestration.

The exterior is in nearly original condition. A modern asphalt shingle roof has been substituted for the original roofing material and the iron cresting on the roof has been removed. The building is still in use as a school.

The interior of the school is largely original and contains four main classrooms. Two classrooms of equal size are located on each floor and they flank a wide, transverse, central hall that begins at the main, West Scott Street entrance and extends to the back wall of the building where the main staircase is located. The staircase, doors and woodwork are all original. Modern suspended ceilings have been added to the classrooms, which otherwise retain much of their original, simple character.

### Social Hall

The social hall is located directly south of the school at 1214 South Eighth Street across from the parsonage. It is a small, one-story, frame, rectangular structure of eclectic design with a hip-roof built in 1898.

The main elevation faces South Eighth Street. It is composed of a projecting, gabled, central entrance pavilion flanked by two, tall, narrow windows. Two Gothic windows are centered in the gabled dormer above the entrance. Originally, two, round, urn-topped pinnacles flanked the dormer, which was originally sided with fish scale wood shingles. There is bracketing at the eaves on the facade. Paneled wood pilasters were located at the corners of the facade and also flanked the entrance pavilion.

The other elevations are utilitarian in character with varying types and sizes of windows corresponding to the interior floor plan requirements. Asbestos tile siding presently covers many of the original details. The gable urns are missing, the round pinnacles have been boxed in and an asphalt shingle roof has been applied.

The social hall was fire damaged several years ago and many original details were lost. The interior has since been extensively remodeled and the walls are now covered with modern, veneered paneling. A kitchen, the other major room, is located at the rear on the east half of the building.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions) Period of Significance Significant Dates

Architecture	1873-1898	1873; 1879 <sup>1</sup> 1885; 1898

	Cultural Affiliation	
	N/A	

Significant Person	Architect/Builder
N/A	Architect: Elleson, Andrew <sup>2</sup> Architect: Rugee, John <sup>3</sup>

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and period of significance noted above.

Significance

The St. Peter's Church complex is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as a result of its local architectural significance under Criterion C. It is being nominated as an exception to the criteria as a religious structure deriving its primary significance from its architectural qualities. It is architecturally significant as a fine example of a nineteenth century protestant church complex built in a variety of styles including a Victorian Gothic style church, an Italianate style school and parsonage, and an eclectically-designed social hall that together illustrate the growth of the congregation over time. The period of significance corresponds with the years during which the four structures in the complex were built.

The Wisconsin Cultural Resources Management Plan has identified Milwaukee County as having had a significant concentration of German Lutherans, the most of any county in the state. Although German Lutheran churches in Milwaukee were not identified as a study priority, the plan has noted that some of the surviving Lutheran churches may possess local architectural significance and that Lutheran structures associated with German immigration, social services, religion and education may possess statewide or national historical significance. St. Peter's, however, does not appear to meet the criteria for either statewide or national historical significance in religion, education, social services or immigration. The history of the congregation indicates that it was typical of many such churches in nineteenth century Milwaukee and was not the site of significant historical developments in religion, education or social services that had any important impact beyond the congregation. However, the complex as a whole does possess architectural significance to the City of Milwaukee, the context within which it is being evaluated.

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**Historical Background**

The near south side is defined as the section of the City of Milwaukee that lies south of the Menomonee River Valley between Lake Michigan and the Village of West Milwaukee. The oldest settled portion is the eastern third known as the Walker's Point plat, much of which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Walker's Point Historic District on December 19, 1978. The nominated structure is located directly west of the old Walker's Point plat in a later developed area commonly known as West Walker's Point or simply as the near south side. The neighborhood's principal period of development was from 1870 to 1900. This area was always a modest working-class neighborhood of small, detached, frame worker's cottages. Its original residents were almost entirely European immigrants who worked in the heavily industrialized Menomonee Valley or maintained small commercial establishments. To a large extent, that is still true today. National Avenue is the principal traffic artery and commercial street in the area. Because of the modest character of the housing, churches, fraternal lodge halls and institutions are the principal architectural monuments on the near South Side.

The near South Side has always been one of Milwaukee's most dynamic melting pot neighborhoods. First settled by a mixture of German immigrants and Yankees from New York and New England in the early 1850s, the neighborhood evolved over the years into one of the most ethnically mixed areas of the city. Eventually communities of Irish, Swedes, Norwegians, Poles and Serbians came to occupy the compact area as well. Although the Germans remained the dominant group for years, the other minorities each developed their own religious and social institutions. The important wave of post World War II immigration from Eastern and Central Europe renewed Milwaukee's nationally known, but by then fading, multi-ethnic old world character by bringing significant numbers of European immigrants into the city. Many of the immigrants settled on the near South Side reviving its multi-ethnic character. The neighborhood has continued its historical role as the city's most important melting pot, but today is becoming home to Hispanic and Southeast Asian minorities rather than European immigrants.

**St. Peter's Church History**

The successive waves of German immigration to Milwaukee in the nineteenth century necessitated the founding of numerous churches. St. Peter's was one of the earlier German Lutheran congregations, having been founded in 1860 by 34 members.<sup>4</sup>

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As was the case with many churches in the nineteenth century, the parish first met in borrowed facilities before constructing a series of steadily larger church buildings and related facilities. The first church, a small frame building, was purchased in 1861 and was temporarily moved to a lot owned by the parish on South Third Street. In 1861, the property at the corner of South Eighth and West Scott Streets was purchased and the frame building was moved there.<sup>5</sup>

In 1866 a brick veneered church building with classrooms in the basement was constructed on the northwest corner. It was designed by John Rugee. The church was gabled roofed and rectangular in plan with no steeple. The Gothic lancet windows added a touch of style to an otherwise rather plain vernacular building. The present wooden rectory was the next structure to be built in 1873. The parish school outgrew the church basement and the present school was built in 1879.<sup>6</sup> By 1885 the student body numbered about 350.

Although the congregation had temporary dips in membership, most notably in 1873, 1880 and 1884 when dissatisfied members left to begin new churches, the membership had grown to 350 families by 1885 when the present church was built. Former members of St. Peter's were instrumental in founding the following Lutheran churches in Milwaukee: St. Jacobi (1873), Zion (1880), Christ (1884) and St. Andrew's (1895).<sup>7</sup> The present church was dedicated on March 14, 1886. At that time the seating capacity was reported to be 1200. The old brick church on the northwest corner was sold to G. Schloemer who used it briefly as a Catholic social center before it was replaced in 1894 by the Schloemer Apartments, which still occupy the site today.<sup>8</sup>

The parish hall, built in 1898, was the last building to be added to the complex. The complex is still owned and used by the St. Peter's congregation.

Architecture

The St. Peter's Lutheran Church Complex is architecturally significant as a well-preserved Victorian church complex with a variety of building types illustrating the full range of functions conducted by a large German Lutheran congregation at the period. It is also important for the variety of architectural styles represented by the different buildings within the group, illustrating the growth and evolution of the church compound over time.

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The most imposing building in the complex is the church, which was built in 1885. It is one of the more unusual examples of Victorian Gothic style ecclesiastical architecture in the city because of its unique tower design, and a distinctive landmark on the south side skyline. German Lutheran congregations in Milwaukee were particularly partial to spiky, brick churches, often with multiple towers of differing heights. Presumably the design inspiration was derived from both northern German medieval and nineteenth century churches. Since it was built for a German parish, it is not surprising that the church building displays some German architectural influence. The pedimented gables on the main steeple, for example, are similar to features on St. Mary's in Lubeck, a fourteenth century brick church in northern Germany. Many of Milwaukee's German Lutherans immigrated from northern Germany, especially from Pomerania.

The twin-steepled facade of St. Peter's is significant for its size and its overall impact on the surrounding area. Double steeples were usually an earmark of city churches. The larger of the steeples, located at the street corner, adapted itself particularly well to creating a visual landmark on the urban landscape. Towering as it does over the huddle of one and two-story frame houses, St. Peter's is a prominent visual feature of the neighborhood that by its stature alone conveys an impression of the central role of religion in nineteenth century immigrant neighborhoods. Because of the unique vantage point from which many people now view the city when travelling on the elevated I-94 freeway, the landmark quality of churches like St. Peters, that jut-up like peaks out of the level plain of low wooden houses that characterizes the south side, has been reinforced as a means of identifying neighborhoods and locating oneself within the city.

The other buildings in the church grouping illustrate the hierarchy of importance given to non-ecclesiastical functions in German protestant congregations. The solid, dignified, Italianate style school building stands as a monument to the importance of parochial schooling in the nineteenth century. The virtually unaltered structure was built in 1879, even before the congregation could afford to build a permanent church.

The social hall, at 1214 South Eighth Street, built in 1898, is an unusual one-story frame building that stylistically was originally an eclectic combination of Classical and Gothic stylistic features. It has been significantly altered by the removal of most of its decorative features, but survives as a reminder of the role of the church in the social life of its congregation. The dinners, parties, lectures, bazaars, club meetings and the

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many other social activities important to nineteenth century church life at St. Peter's necessitated the construction a large multipurpose hall. The hall at St. Peter's is one of the few free standing, nineteenth century examples to survive in Milwaukee. Most such halls were located in the church itself, often in the basement.

The parsonage, which was built in 1873, is a plain structure of utilitarian design. It contrasts with the other buildings in the complex in that no effort was made to architecturally embellish it. In its functional, unornamented original state it conveyed a clear sense of the role of the pastor at St. Peter's as the thrifty, no-nonsense, spiritual leader of the church. Of course, its location immediately adjacent to the church in the middle of the complex was also an indication of how closely the life of the pastor and his family was tied to the life of the church.

The two architects associated with the St. Peter's complex are members of the little known fraternity of architects who practiced almost exclusively on the city's south side and never achieved city wide recognition or reputations. John Rugee was a south side builder and architect active from the 1850s until the early 1890s. He was the best known south side builder and architect of his period and designed the first public school house in the south side survey area in 1859 (razed) as well as churches, bridges and commercial blocks. He designed the first St. Peters in 1866. His known work was all built of cream brick and was predominantly Italianate in style. St. Peter's School is a good surviving example of his institutional work. Andrew Elleson was active from the 1880s into the early 1900s. Little else is known about him other than that he designed churches, commercial buildings and houses and worked almost exclusively on the south side. He designed several other south side churches including the modest Norwegian Lutheran Free Church at 700 West Madison Street and the Scandinavian Lutheran Church at 202 West Scott Street. St. Peter's is by far his most distinguished known work.

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FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> 75 Years of Grace, 1860-1935 (Milwaukee: St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1935), pp. 9, 11.

<sup>2</sup> One Hundred Years of Grace, 1860-1960 (Milwaukee: St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1960), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> History of Milwaukee (Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1881), p. 929.

<sup>4</sup> History of Milwaukee, p. 928.

<sup>5</sup> One Hundred Years of Grace, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> History of Milwaukee, pp. 929-930.

<sup>7</sup> 75 Years of Grace, pp. 9, 11.

<sup>8</sup> Milwaukee Sentinel, July 13, 1890, p. 12.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

Books

History of Milwaukee. Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1881.  
X See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36) CFR 67) 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:  
Department of City Development  
809 North Broadway, Milw. WI 53202

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A	<u>1/6</u>	<u>4/2/4/9/4/0</u>	<u>4/7/6/3/1/1/0</u>	B	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / /</u>	D	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / /</u>
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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Walker's Point Addn in SW 1/4 Sec 32-7-22 Block 9 Lot 2 and Block 10 Lots 10 & 12 in the City of Milwaukee.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated parcels are the lots acquired by the congregation for the construction of the church, parsonage, social hall and school

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Les Vollmert/Paul Jakobovich</u>	Date	<u>April 15, 1987</u>
organization	<u>Dept. of City Development</u>	telephone	<u>(414)223-5705</u>
street & number	<u>809 North Broadway</u>	state	<u>WI</u>
city or town	<u>Milwaukee</u>	zip code	<u>53202</u>

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Pamphlets

One Hundred Years of Grace, 1860-1960. Milwaukee: St. Peter's Evangelical  
Lutheran Church, 1960.

75 Years of Grace, 1860-1935. Milwaukee: St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran  
Church, 1960.

Periodicals

Milwaukee Sentinel. January 7, 1880; March 22, 1886; July 13, 1890.

**WEST SCOTT STREET**

**CHURCH**

**1213 SOUTH 8TH STREET**

**PARSONAGE**

**1215 SOUTH 8TH STREET**

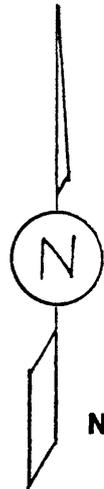
**SOUTH 8TH STREET**

**SCHOOL**

**1204 SOUTH 8TH STREET**

**SOCIAL HALL**

**1214 SOUTH 8TH STREET**



**No Scale**

**ST. PETER'S  
LUTHERAN CHURCH COMPLEX  
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN**