

# HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

## SALEM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

(Written Summer 1982)

### I. NAME

Historic: Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church

Common: Same

### II. LOCATION

Street Address: 6814 North 107<sup>th</sup> Street

Tax Key Number: 115-9968-100

Legal Description: That part of the northwest ¼ of Section 20, T.8 N., R.21 E., described as follows: Commencing at the southwest corner of said ¼ section, running thence east 132.00 feet to a corner, thence north 247.50 feet to a corner, thence west on a parallel line with the quarter line 132.00 feet to a corner, thence south along the centerline of the road 247.50 feet to the place of beginning.

### III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

### IV. OWNER

Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church  
6814 N. 107<sup>th</sup> Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53224

### V. YEAR BUILT

1863 (alterations in 1922, 1946, 1947 and 1949)

Architect: Unknown

### VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church is sited in the former Village of West Granville, a nineteenth century rural hamlet consisting of a few houses, two churches and a cemetery centered near the interaction of North 107<sup>th</sup> Street and West Fond du Lac Avenue. The church occupies a site of about ¾ acre measuring 132' x 247'.

The church is an end-gabled roofed, cream brick, rectangular structure of Lombard Italianate design, with random ashlar foundations. It measures about 39' x 60'. The three-bay-wide, arcaded façade is fenestrated with a pair of tall arched windows flanking a central door with transom surmounted by an

arched panel of blind tracery. Over the entrance, in the gable, is a stone date plaque. The eaves are trimmed with a wood cornice ornamented with widely spaced wooden brackets. A square, wood shingled, Gothic belfry dating from 1922 raises from the front of the peaked roof.

The side elevations are composed of four bays of arched windows separated by brick piers. The wooden Italianate cornice extends around the sides from the front with paired wooden brackets located over the piers.

The rear of the building has a two-room, flat-roofed, cream brick, school addition built in 1949. Various other minor alterations have been made to the exterior over the years including the installation of the present art glass windows in 1922 and the construction of a concrete block basement entrance enclosure.

## **VII. SIGNIFICANCE**

Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church is architecturally significant as a fine example of a pioneer era, cream brick, Italianate church that has been preserved with much of its character intact. It is historically important not only for its role in the life of the old farming village of West Granville and as the home of a pioneer Lutheran congregation, but also for its associations with important historic event in the early history of the Lutheran Church in Wisconsin, since the first meeting of the Wisconsin Synod was hosted by this congregation on May 26, 1850. It is also significant as a key structure in the old village area of West Granville and is a local visual landmark.

## **VIII. HISTORY**

The first period of settlement in what became the town of West Granville occurred in the 1840's when its agricultural lands were sold off in farm-sized tracts. The early settlers included both Yankees and Germans, the latter chiefly from Brandenburg and Pomerania. In 1847 about twenty families, including both Yankees and Germans, cooperated in building a log chapel across the road from Salem Church, which both groups used for their separate worship services. It was known as the Salem Evangelical and Reformed Church of Granville. The more Yankee Reformed portions of the congregation built a separate church, the still extant West Granville Presbyterian Church, nearby in 1861.

The remaining Salem Evangelical Lutheran Congregation remained in the log church that had been the site of the first meeting of the Wisconsin Synod in 1850. By 1863 the congregation had grown to the point that it required a larger church, and the present structure was built across the road from the old log chapel, which was eventually razed. The new church was no doubt intended to rival the splendor of the brick Presbyterian Church, which it resembles in many ways.

The Salem Congregation remained in the building until 1977 when it moved to a new church and school complex nearby. In the interim, various enlargements and modifications were made to the old building. In 1922 a new belfry was added, as were new art glass windows. In the 1940's a campaign of improvements was undertaken to provide more space for the growing congregation including enlarging the basement in 1946, building a small flat-roofed school addition to the rear in 1949, and generally remodeling the interior.

Since 1985 the church has been used as a museum operated by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Institute. It is used for displays relating to the history of the synod as well as for special events. It is currently undergoing a phased restoration.

## **IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church, 6814 North 107<sup>th</sup> Street, be designated as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1, e-2, e-5, e-8 and e-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e), of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

## **X. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES**

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or the restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

### **A. Roofs**

Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels should not be added to the roof surfaces of the church itself. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline or pitch. Alterations to the roof of the school addition at the rear of the church should be made so as not to detract from the historic appearance of the church complex.

### **B. Materials**

#### **1. Masonry**

- a. Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
- b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and point styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed.
- c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick, terra cotta or stone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration and the accumulation of dirt on the exterior of the building. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone. Cleaning the brick on the church is not recommended since it would remove the patina of age that gives the church its distinctive appearance. It is also likely to accentuate differences in the brickwork where alterations and repairs have been made over the years.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed.

#### **2. Wood/Metal**

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance.

- b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed.

C. Windows and Doors

- 1. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore to the original condition. Avoid making addition openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes or sash.
- 2. Respect the building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements. Avoid filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building. The leaded glass windows in the church should not be altered or removed except for restoration.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design and appearance.

E. Additions

The north, east and west elevations of the church are integral to the structure's architectural significance. Additions are not recommended and require the approval of the Commission. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of height, roof configuration, fenestration, scale, design and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevations. Additions may be made to the 1949 rear addition of the church, subject to Commission approval.

F. Signs

The installation of any permanent exterior sign shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign with the historic and architectural character of the building.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, railing, fencing, paving and exterior lighting fixtures shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed so as to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the building.

1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the church. It should be accomplished as much as possible to maintain the appearance of the old church from the street as a freestanding structure.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components such as overhangs and fenestration that are in close proximity to the historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of that structure.

3. Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the old building as a distinct freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic structure if they are in close proximity to it.

4. Materials

The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the historic buildings should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions and combinations of cladding materials used on those structures. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.