

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic The Waldensian Church and Cemetery of Stone Prairie

and/or common The Waldensian Presbyterian Church and Cemetery

2. Location

street & number Route 2

not for publication

city, town Monett

X vicinity of

state Missouri

code 29

county Barry

code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Trustees of Waldensian Presbyterian Church

street & number

city, town Monett

X vicinity of

state Missouri 65708

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Recorder of Deeds, Barry County Courthouse

street & number President of the Board of Trustees (Mr. Raymond McNeeley, Monett, Missouri)

city, town Cassville

state Missouri

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Missouri Historical Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176

city, town Jefferson City

state Missouri 65102

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The present structure, built in 1908, consists of sanctuary and bell tower. The walls and bell tower are constructed of concrete blocks that were cast in Monett.

The roof is a composition shingle, laid on wood sheeting constructed with a series of wood scissor type trusses which are not exposed. The size of the sanctuary is 30 feet wide and 40 feet long outside dimensions. A basement room below the sanctuary was used as kitchen and Sunday School Room. The bell was removed from the bell tower before 1920 because of damage in the tower created by a tornado. The original bell hangs on a steel tower north of the church and is still used on occasions.

An education building was completed at the back of the sanctuary October 30th, 1962 with 8 rooms on the main level and a large fellowship hall in the basement.

From 1877 until around 1910 the original church structure was a small frame building located north of the present church structure. This one room frame building can be seen at the north side of the church in the picture on page 8 of the Pictorial Edition of the Waldensian Historical Journal.

Adjoining the church on the northwest side, is the cemetery which is also included within the nomination. It's 141 lots are arranged in precise rows. Tombstones are generally simple, with the earlier ones being carved out of limestone, while the more recent markers are of granite. Nowhere is the ethnic character more apparent than in this cemetery, where fully 90% of the names are French.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1908

Builder/Architect unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Waldensian Church and Cemetery is significant under Criterion A to wit: That it is associated with the development of the Waldensian Colony of Barry Co., Mo., an event significant to the broad pattern of immigration in American and Missouri History.

The Ozarks, despite its image in the popular mind as a haven for hillbillies, is, in fact, a region of great ethnic complexity. The British Isles via the Upper South was hardly the sole source of its population; people from many countries have settled there: French in the 18th and 19th centuries, Germans beginning in the early to mid 19th century. After the Civil War, railroads, eager to dispose of large land grants, sought to attract European immigrants to their holdings in the Missouri Ozarks. Many groups responded: Swiss, Italian, Austrian, Swedish, German, Polish, Hungarian, French, etc. These groups found a tolerant and hospitable environment and they generally flourished and became thoroughly "Americanized".

The Waldensian Presbyterian church of Stone Prairie is an important symbol of the process of immigration as applied to one group - the Waldensians of Italy's Cottian Alps, who arrived in southern Missouri, via Uruguay. This remarkable group had a strong identity shaped by centuries of religious persecution. Founded in the 12th century this movement, which originated in Lyons, France, early on defied the Roman Catholic Church and was the object of crusades in the 13th and 15th centuries which forced the Waldensians to retreat to the mountain fastness of the Cottian Alps of Italy. In 1526, they allied with the Calvinist reformation. The following century saw brutal attempts to exterminate them. By the mid 18th century their situation began to improve somewhat and finally, in 1848, they were granted freedom of worship. In response to overcrowding in the valleys, some groups began emigrating at this time. In the 1850's, one group emigrated to Uruguay.

It was from Uruguay that, in 1875, a small group departed for the United States, landing in New York and eventually making their way to Barry County in southwest Missouri, where they purchased land from the Atlantic and Pacific (now St. Louis and San Francisco) Railroad.

In the center of their colony, on a 40 acre tract donated by the railroad, they established their church, a small frame structure, and cemetery.

The Waldensian settlement in Barry County experienced the ironies of success in their new homeland. After hardships in their early beginnings, they prospered and established quality homes, which were in the main indistinguishable from those of their American

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Waldensian Church and

Continuation sheet Cemetery

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neighbors, planted small grain crops on their ca. 160 acre farms, large for the area, and like their American neighbors, let their stock graze on "free range". By 1879, the colony had 72 people, 54 of whom were Waldensians. The ethnic identity that had been forged by persecution, became diluted by the opposite effects of tolerant, friendly neighbors and political stability, so that gradually the settlers became thoroughly "Americanized" and lost most contacts with their native French language, customs, and material culture.

Although their distinctive religious identity was the essential element of the group cohesiveness over the centuries, it was precisely this vital core that began to break down in the Barry County Waldensian settlement after the first decade of its existence. There are three principal reasons for this. The first is that after the initial leader of the colony, Rev. Jean Michelin Salomon, resigned in 1834, no figure of similiar stature emerged to take his place. There followed a succession of pastors, some effective some not, who generally did not remain for more than two or three years. While most were Presbyterian and either French or Swiss, they were not always Waldensian. The next 23 years saw nine pastors come and go; often the colony would be without a pastor for a year or two. In addition to this unstable situation, and probably because of it to some degree, religious controversies grew up, particularly over the issue of Baptism, which caused defections and discontent for over a decade. A final reason was the fact that while the colony added new members during its first quarter of a century, a significant number of these new additions were not Waldensians, but French speaking natives of other countries, primarily southern France and Switzerland. Thus, while the colony continued to grow and prosper, its ethnic identity progressively weakened.

The process of dilution and assimilation is symbolized by the church building, which is a testament, not to the forces of tradition, but to those of transition and change. It's very building in 1908 was a witness to the fact that the colony was prosperous, and had outgrown their small frame church, which they demolished with no apparent nostalgia upon constructing the new church. The new church was no way an expression of distinctive Waldensian building traditions, but is rather a typical small vernacular Gothic styled church with a tower set at the front of a longitudinal sanctuary. There is an amusing parody of folk building techniques in the rock faced concrete blocks, manufactured at nearby Monett, of which the church is built. The church is completely "American"; it sides squarely with the forces of modernity and homogeneity.

These forces were expressed in other significant ways at around the same time the church was built. In 1907, French was abandoned entirely in Sunday School and church services in favor of English, and around this same period, beginning in 1912, American pastors started to replace foreign pastors in the pulpit. By 1940, no traces of a distinctive Waldensian heritage could be detected in speech, customs, celebrations, material culture or practices. But the descendants with their French surnames have remained in the area and continue to be prosperous farmers or to pursue other occupaions in nearby Monett. Many have received college educations and moved on. Not only did the Waldensians benefit from their move to America; but the reverse was true as well. Their strong religious

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principles, their law abiding nature, and their ambition to improve themselves have made the Waldensian colony a valuable and appreciated addition to the cultural diversity that is the Ozarks.

As irony would have it, now that the assimilation process has completely had its way and absorbed the Waldensian colony into the American mainstream, there has arisen a local interest in the heritage that was abandoned. In 1973, the Waldensian Historical Society of Monett, Missouri with Henry Avondet (who lived the first fifteen years of his life in the valleys) as its first president. The Society's stated purpose is to "preserve and reproduce available historical material and provide opportunity for research and learning, with the development of an association of people who may, or may not, be of Waldensian descent having an interest in Waldensian history and its tradition." The several publications this group has produced have already made an important contribution towards their stated goal. In 1975, they erected a monument to their founders. The church continues to reflect the progress of the congregation; in 1962 a new education wing was added; at some point the sanctuary was remodeled to look "modern". Still, the church has stood for 76 years, and along with its cemetery, where nearly all the first generation settlers are laid to rest, is the vital center in popular perception of the Waldensian heritage of Monett, Mo. - a heritage compounded from a history of persecution and perseverance, a mountain homeland, and a complex but essentially triumphant emigration experience.

The Waldensian Presbyterian Church of Barry County is one of three presently existing in the United States that were established by Waldensians. The first was in New York City, the second in Barry County, the third in Valdese, North Carolina. The last mentioned was the most successful Waldensian colonization venture in the United States. Founded in 1893, its settlers came directly from the Valleys and were larger in number than those who comprised the Barry County colony.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Gerlack, Russel L. Immigrants in the Ozark: A Study in Ethnic Geography. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1976.
2. Watts, George B. The Waldenses in the New World. Durham: Duke University Press, 1941

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2.03

Quadrangle name "Monett, Mo."

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	5	4	1	8	1	6	0	4	8	0	3	6	8	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

B 

1	5	4	1	8	1	8	0	4	8	0	3	5	4	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

C 

1	5	4	1	8	1	2	0	4	8	0	3	5	3	0
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D 

1	5	4	1	8	1	2	0	4	8	0	3	6	8	0
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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Only the church and cemetary portions of the present church holdings are being nominated and are entirely contained within the above referenced UTM coordinates. This is the most compact boundry which contains the significant properties, but not intrusions.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title J. James M. Denny, Chief, Survey & Registration

organization Department of Natural Resources

date June 20, 1984

street & number 1915 Southridge Dr., P.O. Box 176

telephone 751-4096

city or town Jefferson City

state Missouri 65102

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  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

John Karel, Director & Deputy State Historic Preservation

title Officer, Division of Parks & Historic Preservation

date 11/28/84

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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The Waldensian Church  
Continuation sheet and Cemetery

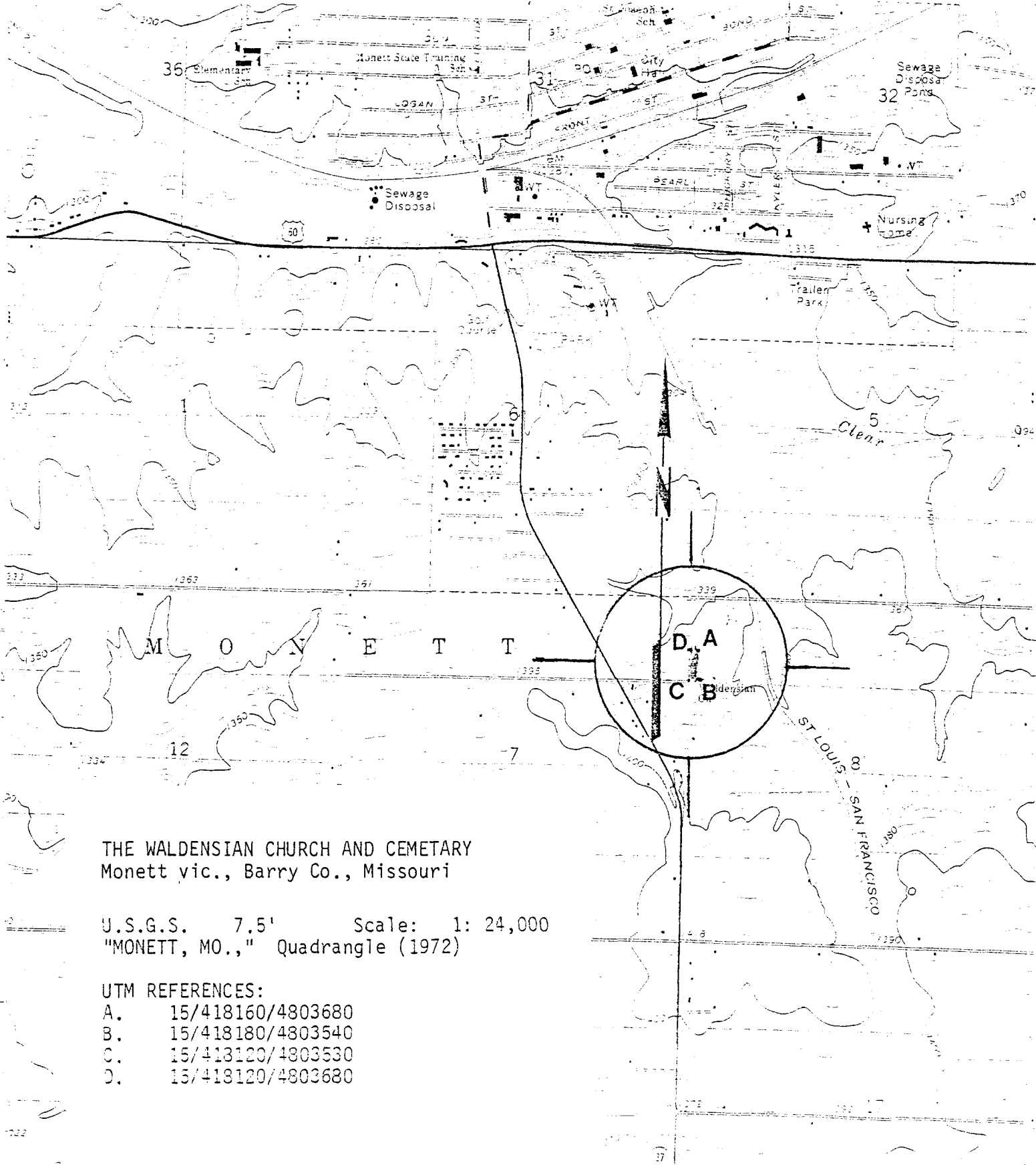
Item number 11

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2. Charles E. D'Arcy, Pastor

Rt.2  
Monett

December 29, 1980  
417-235-3337  
Missouri 65708



THE WALDENSIAN CHURCH AND CEMETARY  
 Monett vic., Barry Co., Missouri

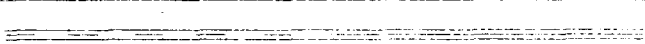
U.S.G.S. 7.5' Scale: 1: 24,000  
 "MONETT, MO.," Quadrangle (1972)

UTM REFERENCES:

- A. 15/418160/4803680
- B. 15/418180/4803540
- C. 15/413120/4803530
- D. 15/418120/4803680

15 R. 23 N PURDY 29 W 17 N 17 PURDY 29 W 17 N 55 16  
 1087 314 CASSVILLE 15 N 17  
 SCALE 1:24,000

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IN MEMORY  
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FOR BENEFIT



EAST FRISCO RAILROAD TRAVIS

CHURCH BUILDING COMPLETED IN 1908





















Church Building Constructed in 1908





(1975) WEST BOUNDARY OLD HIGHWAY #37

SOUTH BOUNDARY EMER BOUNDARY PROPERTY

NORTH BOUNDARY COUNTY ROAD



EAST FRISCO RAILROAD TRACKS