Bethel College Administration Building

Bethel College Campus

North Newton

Kansas 67117

The Bethel College of the Mennonite Church of North America

North Newton

Register of Deeds

Harvey County Courthouse

Newton

Kansas 67114

Federal Writers' Project of the Works Project Administration

1939

Records destroyed.

A guidebook, Kansas, was published in 1939.
The Bethel College Administration Building in North Newton, Kansas, is an irregular T-shaped structure, three stories in height and with a full basement. The building faces south with the stem of the "T" in a northerly direction. The main portion of the building is approximately 116 feet long and 54 feet wide with an overall height of 50 feet. The north wing is 30 feet by 40 feet. Exterior walls are constructed of rough faced native stone laid in uniform horizontal courses, which alternate vertically between wide and narrow. Stone lengths are random. The first floor is raised several feet above the ground and is marked around the perimeter of the building by a smooth stone belt line.

The roof form is a moderately steep hip covered with wood shingles. An ornamental cornice separates the roof from the stone walls. Dual semicircular towers are placed at the corners of the north wing and extend the full building height to the roof line. Cone-shaped roofs crown both towers. Two towers flank the main entrance on the south facade. The west tower is semicircular in form and is detailed similar to the north towers. The east tower, which is octagonal, extends above the main roof line and terminates in a pointed octagonal roof.

The basement windows are located directly below the smooth stone belt line which serves as the lintel. These windows are simple rectangles with stone sills and no special decoration. Windows on the first floor are paired in openings with large semicircular arches. Second floor and tower windows are simple rectangles with stone sills and lintels. The third floor, which is located behind the hip roof, has rectangular dormer windows plus small windows in the octagonal tower and in a gable over the main entrance. The main entrance is located behind an enormous stone arched opening and is reached by a monumental stairway. The building is in excellent condition and is a fine example of the Romanesque style executed in stone. Aluminum doors and frames have been installed at the front entrance; otherwise the exterior is basically original.
Bethel College in North Newton was organized in 1887 when the Mennonite church expanded its seminary at Halstead into an academy. Newton was chosen as the site for the college when the city offered 120 acres of land, valued at $85,000, and $15,000 in cash for erection of the administration building. In April, 1887, the general conference of the Mennonite church consented to a private organization building and maintaining a college in accordance with the Newton offer. The private corporation, The Bethel College of the Mennonite Church of North America, was granted a charter by the Kansas secretary of state on May 23, 1887.

Immediately after the charter was granted, the building committee opened correspondence with several architects and visited five other Kansas colleges to gather information concerning the best plans for a modern college building. On October 20, 1887, the board approved the plans submitted by Willis T. Proudfoot of Wichita.

Construction of the foundation began in December, 1887, and the cornerstone was laid October 12, 1888. Shortly thereafter financial difficulties brought a cessation of construction for 21 months. Building operations were resumed in 1890 and by December, 1890, the walls were completed to the window sills of the second story. Contracts for the carpentry and the tin work in the building were let January, 1892, and the masonry work was completed in May, 1892. Although the administration building was not quite completed by the fall of 1893, dedicatory services were held as planned and classes began on September 20, 1893, with an enrollment of 60 students. The building was completed soon afterward at a total cost of $37,000. The school continued as an academy and Bible school until 1912 when the first Bachelor of Arts degrees were granted.

The Bethel College Administration Building is the oldest Mennonite institution of higher learning in the United States. In addition to its historic significance, the Administration Building is an attractive, well-preserved and well executed example of the Romanesque style in Kansas stone.
"Saga of Bethel," Trails, v. 1, no. 6 (April-May, 1936).
Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Instruction
Wedel, Peter J., The Story of Bethel College (North Newton, Kan.,
The Mennonite Press, 1954), pp. 55-57, 61, 62, 76-78, 84,
85, 88, 89.
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

First Annual Report of the Board of Directors of Bethel College, 1887-88
(St. Louis, Mo., A. Wiebusch and Son Printing Co., 1888), pp. 8, 20, 21.
Hartinger, John Ellsworth, Education Among the Mennonites of America
Haury, G. A., "Bethel College--Historical Sketch--Realization of Vision of
Kaufman, Ed G., "Crises in Bethel's History," Mennonite Life, v. 18, no. 2
(April, 1963), p. 53-56.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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One-two acres

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Richard Pankratz, Planner
Charles Hall, Architectural Consultant
ORGANIZATION: Kansas State Historical Society
STREET AND NUMBER: 120 West Tenth Street
CITY OR TOWN: Topeka

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National [ ] State [X] Local [ ]

Name: Nyle H. Miller
Title: Executive Secretary, Kansas State Historical Society
Date: December 2, 1971

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date: __________________________