

Church Architecture

The early architecture of the prairie often found its most eloquent expression in its churches (see photo on front cover). Sometimes, the churches were massive stone and brick edifices. More often, they were plain, stark constructions of wood, such as this beautiful old Methodist church of Ashley, North Dakota (which has been restored for use as the town's library by the Ashley Woman's Club).

There are several distinguishing features of the Ashley church/library: beautiful windows set in diamond-shaped frames, gingerbread cornices, black iron railings, a majestic tower. Inside, there are gleaming hardwood floors and an abundance of woodwork.

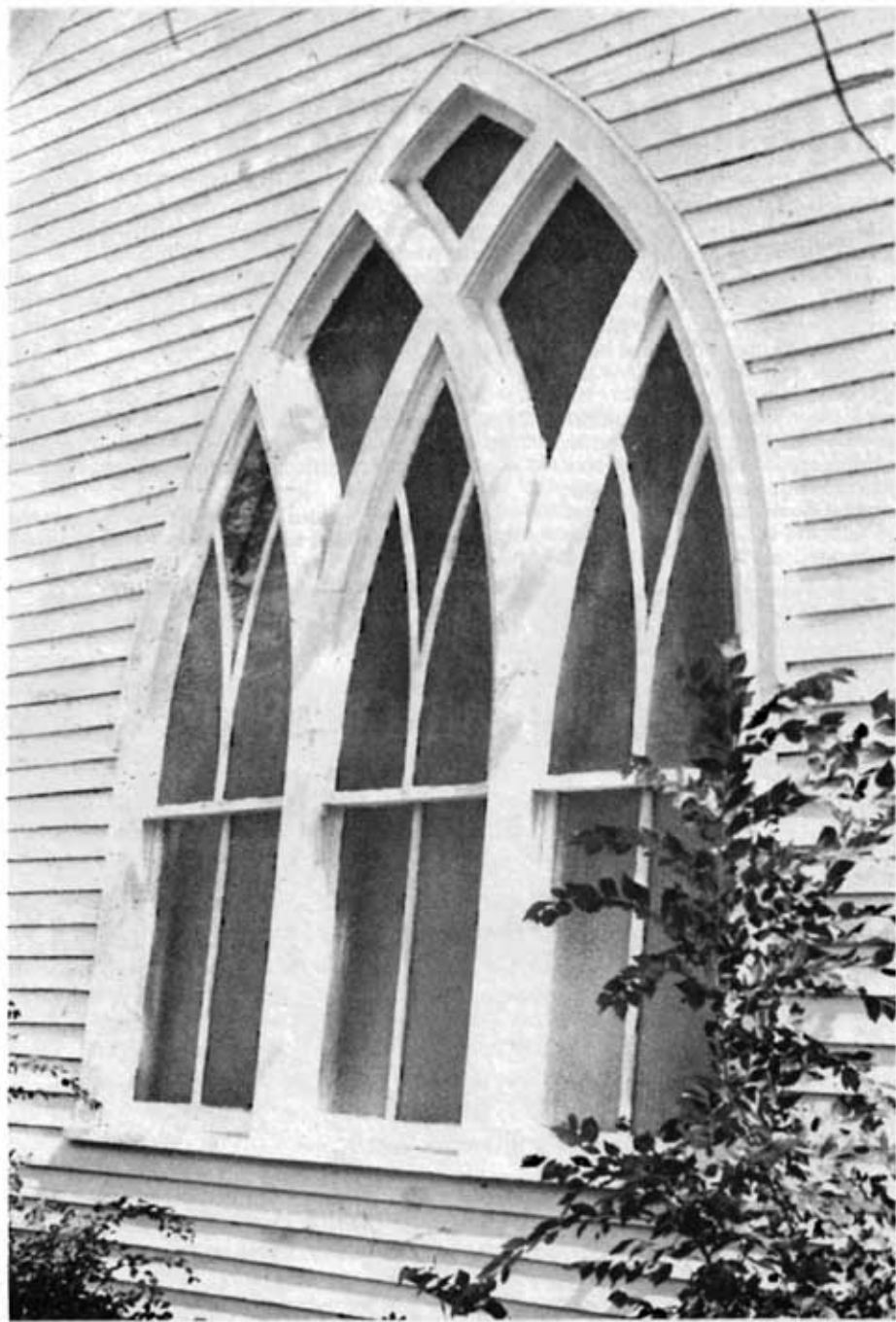
The building is located on its original lot, a

space of well-manicured shrubbery and plentiful trees. The landscaping emphasizes the clean, white lines of the architecture, making the entire building a superb example of the grace and beauty existing in the minds of the pioneers who built it many years ago.

Many of the old country-style churches are unique examples of fine prairie architecture, and great care should be done before any of them are remodeled. If additions are made, one of the first

Gingerbread cornice of curves and patterns at top of roof is so fluid it looks like the wood is almost molten.





Window frame is bold expression of tulip design, with smaller window panes in delicate diamond patterns.



Window above doorway repeats tulip shape of front window.

considerations should be whether the new entry way (or whatever the new addition is) is compatible with the existing lines of the original structure. Questions to ask are: Does the addition have the same roof pitch? Is the wood siding the same as the original's? Do doorways and windows match or blend with the original structure? Are interior distinguishing features being adequately preserved?

Still another consideration is a totally new use of the church building, such as was done in Ashley with its public library. Every possible effort should be done to preserve these country churches, mainly because most of such excellent examples of superb design. □