

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 1216 – 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue WestCity or town: Duluth State: MN County: St. LouisNot For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

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Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

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State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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Signature of commenting official:

Date

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Title :

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State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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Name of Property

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☒
- Public – Local ☒
- Public – State ☐
- Public – Federal ☐

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
- District ☐
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing                | Noncontributing             |            |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|
| <u>2</u>                    | <u>                    </u> | buildings  |
| <u>                    </u> | <u>                    </u> | sites      |
| <u>                    </u> | <u>                    </u> | structures |
| <u>                    </u> | <u>                    </u> | objects    |
| <u>2</u>                    | <u>0</u>                    | Total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/church-related residence

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/church-related residence

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Eclectic Period Revival (church)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Georgian Revival (parish home)

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style (fellowship hall)

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

See continuation sheets.

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## Narrative Description

See continuation sheets.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☒ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE/European

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**Period of Significance**

1924-1973

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**Significant Dates**

1924

1946

1972

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**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

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**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

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**Architect/Builder**

See continuation sheets

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

See continuation sheets.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

See continuation sheets.



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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See continuation sheets.

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** SL-DUL-2281

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acres of Property:** Less than one acre

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: Longitude:

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 15 Easting: 558857 Northing: 5168719

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 6-11, Block 39, Gary First Division, and City of Duluth right-of-way between these lots and the sidewalk on the east side of 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue West.

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This boundary encompasses the property historically associated with the church.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Charlene Roise, Historian  
organization: Charlene Roise, Historian, LLC  
street & number: 819 West Minnehaha Parkway  
city or town: Minneapolis state: MN zip code: 55419  
e-mail: charlene@roise.com  
telephone: 612-747-3040  
date: July 2023

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

See continuation sheets.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours  
Tier 2 – 120 hours  
Tier 3 – 230 hours  
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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N/A

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Section number 7 Page 1**7. Description****Summary Paragraph**

St. George Serbian Orthodox Church features the Byzantine Revival Style, making it a landmark in the residential neighborhood of Gary in the City of Duluth. Gold-colored Byzantine crosses top the gable over the front (west) entry, the belltower above, corner towers, and the apse. The main level, situated above a high basement, is reached by a flight of steps centered in the front facade. Highlights of the interior include a gilded iconostasis with icons painted by internationally renowned artist David Ericson, painted canvases with religious scenes on the walls, and stained-glass windows depicting saints and Biblical scenes. A partially subterranean link from the basement's south wall extends to a 1972 fellowship hall addition. A freestanding, single-story parish home, original built on the site of the hall in 1950, was moved further south to make room for the addition. The church, fellowship hall, and parish home are clad in variegated red brick, giving them a harmonious appearance despite their range of construction dates and styles. The property maintains very good integrity.

**Narrative Description**

Saint George Serbian Orthodox Church is in a residential neighborhood in the community of Gary, located at the south (or west, to local residents) end of the City of Duluth. Land in this area descends west to east towards the Saint Louis River. The church is situated at 1216 – 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, just south of Gary Street, one of the community's main transportation corridors.

*Site*

The site comprises Lots 6-11 of Block 39 on the east side of 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Sidewalks along 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue are lined by boulevard trees. The church edifice is at the north end of the site. An addition, the fellowship hall, is attached by a partially subterranean link to the south. Further south is the freestanding parish home. An alley along the church's north side turns south 90 degrees behind the church, bisecting the rest of the block. The church owns additional land used for parking north of the alley and across 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the west; this land is not included the boundaries of the nominated property.

A polished granite marker near the northwest corner of the church is etched with "St. George Serbian Orthodox Church," "Est. 1923," and two Byzantine crosses. A bronze plaque attached below indicates that the monument dates from 2006. This monument was originally located by a flagpole in front of the fellowship hall on the other side of the church. It was moved in 2013 when two concrete benches and a plaza with memorial pavers were installed around the flagpole. A plaque on the flagpole's exposed-aggregate concrete base thanks "Members Past and Present, that paved the way for our Beloved Church."

*Church*

The church displays the Byzantine Revival Style, which was a popular for Orthodox church construction throughout the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The walls of the church are wire-cut, variegated red brick. They rise from a high basement to a gable-front roof clad with metal roofing patterned to look like clay tile. A water table of angled, soldier bricks marks the line between the first floor and basement. The front (west) facade has a projecting center bay ornamented with brick pilasters. Concrete stairs lead from the

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sidewalk to the main entrance in a single-story, front-gable projection from the center bay. Original solid-brick barriers with stone caps are supplemented by newer metal railings. The walls of the projecting entrance are ornamented with partial-height pilasters with sloped limestone caps. A header-brick stringcourse above the doorway echoes the stone fascia below the projection's gable roof. A gold-colored Byzantine cross rises from the peak of the gable. Compound arches surround a deeply recessed pair of wood doors (not original) with panel and cross motifs and a stained-glass transom.<sup>1</sup>

Above the projecting entrance is a tall, arched window opening outlined by a projecting course of header bricks with a header-brick sill, a configuration appearing at most of the main-story openings. A large, arched, window opening holds a multi-panel storm window protecting the stained-glass window behind it. Similar storm windows cover tall, arched window openings in the walls flanking the center bay. The header-brick trim continues past the sill to the water table but does not extend to the basement windows directly below, which were originally double-hung sash but are now glass block. The sides of these walls are outlined by buttress-like pilasters. Blind-arch motifs and a denticular cornice follow the gabled roofline. Slender, windowless towers with chamfered corners accentuate the building's four corners. Embedded in the brick near the base of the northwest tower is a stone plaque reading "Serbian Orthodox St. George Church 1923." A similar plaque on the southwest tower is inscribed "СРПСКА ПРАВОСЛАВНА ЦРКВА СВ. ВЕЛИКОМУЧЕНИКА ГЕОРГИЈА 1923." The tower tops are ornamented with projecting header-brick stringcourses, diamond-shaped limestone insets, and limestone coping. Each has a red, metal, octagonal, dome-shaped roof topped by a gilded Byzantine cross.

The center bay becomes a bell tower as it extends above the roof ridge. The tower's lower section is square in plan, trimmed at the top with a row of arched openings, courses of header and soldier bricks, diamond-shaped limestone insets, and a projecting, red metal cornice. The upper section is smaller in plan with chamfered corners. At the base of each corner is a short, brick column with a red, octagonal, pointed-arch cap supporting a gilded Byzantine cross. The walls of the upper section have pairs of large, arched vents and are trimmed at the top with two stringcourses of soldier brick separated by a frieze holding blind arches. The roof maintains the octagonal configuration of the walls below as it arches in a dome form to its apex, crowned by a large, gilded Byzantine cross. The tower holds three bells installed in 1924. An inscription on the largest reads: "This bell donated by the Good Christians of Duluth and Minnesota Village to the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. George, 1924." The middle and small bells are also marked with the date 1924 and carry the names of individuals who donated them.<sup>2</sup>

The articulation of the building's north and south sides is similar to the front with large arched window openings and brick pilasters delineating bays, header courses framing window openings and continuing to the water table, protective storm windows over the window openings, single or paired windows in the basement below, and blind arches and dentils at the cornice line. Near the west end of the south side is a person door and, near the east end, are the walls and roof of a mostly below-grade passageway running between the church's basement and the fellowship hall. Metal picket railings are mounted on top of the passageway's flat roof.

The rear (east) facade is dominated by the curved wall of the apse, which has a semi-conical metal roof attached

<sup>1</sup> The "entrance door to the church" was donated in 1972. ("Treasures from Our Past," *St. George's Church Seventy-fifth Anniversary Newsletter* 1, no.8 (June 1998): 2.)

<sup>2</sup> "Church Bell Donors," in *St. George Serbian Orthodox Church (hereafter SGSOC, Seventy-fifth Anniversary Celebration, 1923-1998, souvenir booklet (Duluth: by the church, 1998), n.p*

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to the wall just below the blind-arch, denticular cornice. The apse has two arched window openings but the facade is otherwise windowless and repeats design features of the other facades. Above the apse, a gilded Byzantine cross is near the east end of the gable roof's ridge line.

On the interior, the nave occupies most of the first floor. It is accessed from a narthex inside the front (west) doorway. A large stone panel is mounted on the narthex's north wall with an inscription in Serbian acknowledging donors who supported the building's construction. The east wall holds a stone plaque honoring "those who made the supreme sacrifice for God and country" in the Second World War. The south side has a stairway with a wood newel post and spindle railing. The stairs going up to the balcony run past stained-glass windows in the south and west walls. The stairs descending to a social hall in the basement are lit by a glass-block window on the west wall and, at the landing, a grade-level exterior door in the south wall. A pair of broad, stained-wood doors with marbled-glass panels and sidelights in the east wall of the narthex opens into the nave.

While the roof of the church is gabled, the nave's ceiling is arched. This references the dome form, which is symbolically important in the Orthodox tradition. The ceiling is painted blue and dotted with gold stars. A multi-tiered crystal chandelier and a vigil lamp are suspended from the ceiling. The chandelier was installed in 1957, replacing a smaller chandelier that was moved to a new location over the balcony at the west end of the nave.<sup>3</sup>

Three large, arched window openings on the north and south walls hold pairs of stained-glass windows. The west window on the north side features Saint Sava and Saint Petka and was installed in 1960-1961. The nativity scene in the central window dates from the following year. The depictions of Saint Stephen and Saint George were placed in the east window circa 1924-1932. On the south side, the west window depicts the crucifixion and Saint Olympia and the center window features Jesus and Saint Nicholas; all date from 1924. Saint John and the Archangel Michael were installed in the east window in 1971.<sup>4</sup>

Painted canvases with religious scenes fill the walls between the windows, depicting Christ's baptism (east) and the ascension (west) on the north side and the Archangel Michael (east) and Christ's resurrection (west) on the south side. The paintings were produced in 1933 by artist K. W. Bergholtz and installed by the St. Germain Bros. Company. The top of the paintings are trimmed by a wood stringcourse encircling the nave. A decorative band is painted at the base of the paintings at the level of the windowsills and continues on the walls beyond the windows. Carpeted aisles along the walls provide access to wood pews, which are separated by a center aisle. The wood floor is exposed beneath the pews.<sup>5</sup>

At the nave's east end, two steps ascend to a platform known as the ambo or bema. Rising from it is an ornate iconostasis separating the nave from the altar. The iconostasis was installed in 1945-1946. The wood structure was painted to look like Carrara marble by the Salmio and Dahlberg Company, painting contractors based in Duluth. The same company was responsible for the gilding. The icons were painted by David Ericson, an internationally known artist who was born in Sweden, grew up in Duluth, and spent much of his career on the

<sup>3</sup> Royal G. Bouschor to Rev. Nikanor Kalik, January 9, 1957; Papageorge Jewelry Company to Rev. Nikanor Kalik, March 27, 1957; Steve Colich, church treasurer, to Papageorge Jewelry Company, NYC, April 9, 1957; and Papageorge Jewelry Company to Steve Colich, April 22, 1957; all in the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church collections (hereafter SGC).

<sup>4</sup> "Donations to Saint George Serbian Orthodox Church, 1923 to 1998," in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.; Dave White to author, email, October 19, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> "Donations to Saint George Serbian Orthodox Church, 1923 to 1998," in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

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East Coast and in Europe (see Statement of Significance).

The classically inspired design has two tiers separated by a frieze and denticular cornice at the height of the nave's stringcourse. The lower tier has four arched bays on each side of a larger, arched opening with the double-leafed Holy Doors, which are opened and closed at symbolic points during a service. The doors have six icons, a pair depicting the Annunciation and one for each of the four evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), following the Orthodox tradition. The icons are mounted in twining grape vines and set a framework surmounted by a Cross Botonee, all gilded. The frames around the icons are also gilded. The altar is somewhat visible through the doors, but a curtain behind the doors can be pulled to completely conceal the altar from the nave.<sup>6</sup>

The bays flanking the Holy Doors are separated by engaged, fluted, Ionic columns with gilded capitals and bases. Gilded molding trims the arches and panels above and below the bays. The third bay on each side of the Holy Doors holds the north and south deacon's doors; the other bays are solid panels. Each holds a painting of a religious figure which, like the Holy Doors, follow Orthodox rubrics. Directly left of the Holy Doors is the Theotokos, a depiction of the Virgin Mary pointing to Christ, who is supported on her arm, as the guide to salvation. Known as the Hodigitria (Guide), this is one of five traditional images associated with Mary.<sup>7</sup> Next to the Theotokos is the church's namesake, Saint George, mounted on a horse and wending a spear. The north deacon door features Saint Stephan and the northernmost bay depicts Saint Sava. To the right of the Holy Doors are icons of Jesus and John the Baptist, with the Archangel Michel on the south deacon door and Saint Nicholas in the southernmost bay.<sup>8</sup>

The upper tier also has arched bays separated by engaged, fluted, Ionic columns that hold paintings of religious figures. Sometimes the second tier of an iconostasis contains icons of the Twelve Great Feasts, but Saint George's iconostasis follows the tradition of honoring saints, with one exception: the panel above the south door depicts the resurrection of Lazarus. The other panels, left to right, feature Saints Demetrius, Basil of Ostrog, Elijah, Peter the Apostle, Paul the Apostle, Ignatius, and Trifan. A taller, center panel has two paintings: the Last Supper, in its traditional location directly above the Holy Doors, surmounted by an icon of the Holy Trinity. The center panel is framed by gilded, fluted pilasters and topped by a broad, curved molding and a large cross that nearly reaches the ceiling. On each side, one bay supports a smaller cross and a pair of bays is crowned with a medallion holding an icon of an angel. Brackets above each of the painted panels on both tiers, except the bays with doors, hold gilded vigil lamps. The original fuel for the lamps was oil; they are now powered by electricity.

Several pulpits/lecterns are in front of the iconostasis. Two are painted white with gold crosses and trim and recessed panels with paintings of lilies. Another is stained wood with elaborate carvings and painted panels. Elaborate carvings also ornament two icon holders and two candlestands filled with sand. Two large, tiered candelabra are made of brass.

An intricately carved wood altar is in the sanctuary behind the iconostasis. The curved east wall of the apse holds two tall, round-headed, stained-glass windows and single stained-glass windows are in the sanctuary's north and

<sup>6</sup> "Holy Doors," Orthodox Wiki, accessed September 14, 2022, [https://orthodoxwiki.org/Holy\\_Doors](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Holy_Doors). The arms of a Cross Botonee terminate in trefoil "buds" symbolizing the Trinity.

<sup>7</sup> "Icons of the Theotokos," Orthodox Wiki, accessed September 14, 2022, [https://orthodoxwiki.org/Icons\\_of\\_the\\_Theotokos](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Icons_of_the_Theotokos).

<sup>8</sup> "Iconostasis," Orthodox Wiki, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Iconostasis>; "Donations to Saint George Serbian Orthodox Church, 1923 to 1998," in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.



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N/A

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south walls. The plaster walls are painted and hold paintings of saints and other objects. A crucifix is directly behind the altar. A chandelier hangs from the apse's half-dome ceiling, which features a painting depicting Jesus, the dove of the Holy Spirit, and an angel. The floor is carpeted.

At the back (west end) of the nave, above the narthex, a balcony has tiers to accommodate the choir, an important acapella accompaniment to the worship service. A metal ladder attached to the wall in the balcony's southwest corner, near the stair, provides access to the bell tower. Ropes to ring the bells are threaded through the balcony ceiling. A gold-painted pipe railing rests on the balcony's low, curved east wall, which is faced with stained wood. A series of painted icons lines the side overlooking the pews in the nave.

The stained-glass windows in the balcony's west wall date from the twenty-first century. The one in the large, center opening depicts two saints. To the north, a window extends below the balcony into a small room directly north of the narthex where worshipers can purchase candles.

The basement of the church was originally used as a social hall and classroom space. The plaster walls are now covered with paneling matching the paneling in the newer fellowship hall to the south. Paneling also covers overhead beams that cross an acoustic-tile dropped ceiling, and the flooring is also a modern material. Accordion-fold doors enclose rooms on the basement's east and north sides. An opening at the east end of the main room's south wall leads to a tunnel providing access to the fellowship hall completed in 1972.

*Fellowship Hall*

The flat-roofed, Neo-Modern fellowship hall is directly south of the church and matches the church's setback from the street. The color of the hall's brick is the same as the church brick but the surfaces are smooth, not wire-cut. Two concrete steps lead from a concrete walkway to a stoop by the front double doors, which are painted white and not the original. Metal spindle railings are on the sides of the stoop. The doorway is slightly recessed in a projecting, windowless entry bay. Directly above the doors a sign reads "St. George American-Serb Hall" with two gold-colored Byzantine crosses. A sconce lights each side of the entry. Red, metal flashing is at the roofline and at grade, which is landscaped with stones.

The remaining front facade is stepped back and the roofline steps down to the north and south, reflecting the interior configuration. Near the south corner is a plaque reading "1972 A.D." Two windows are on the north and south walls of the section at the height of the entry bay. Ornamental, metal picket railings top the front wall of the lower sections, which hold single window openings. The upper section of each window unit has a large, fixed, plate of glass, with two operable sash below. On the north and south sides, white, concrete-block pilasters project at regular intervals. The north facade has a few windows of various sizes and configurations. The south side has a row of four large, plate-glass windows. Part of the concrete-block foundation is visible on the rear (east) wall, which has a ramp leading to a metal door. Another door is in a small, low, concrete-block addition at the southeast corner, which is painted red.

On the interior, the front doors lead into a lobby with a terrazzo floor, a plaster ceiling, and brick and paneled walls with display cases. Two doors on the lobby's east side provide access to offices. Paneled stairways with carpeted stairs descend from the lobby's north and south ends, turn 90 degrees to the east at a landing, and continue to the hall that occupies most of the building. The hall has a terrazzo floor, paneled walls, and a dropped, acoustic-tile ceiling with lighting and vents. Windows in the north and south walls introduce natural light.

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Restrooms beneath the lobby are accessed from recessed corridors in the west end of the hall. Between the corridors is a mural painted by June Uzelac Nyberg and Egil Dahle in 2003 showing a verdant, rural Serbian scene. A pairs of oxen pull wagons carrying men and women dressed in traditional costumes followed on foot by a band. A man walks in the lead guiding the oxen and another rides a horse alongside one of the wagons. A large TV monitor is mounted above the mural.

On the hall's east end, the north half is filled by a commercial kitchen with a serving window. Additional kitchen equipment extends along the hall's north wall. A counter/bar south of the kitchen can be concealed from the hall by an accordion-pleat partition. An exterior door is on the west wall between the kitchen and the counter/bar. Double doors on the north wall open into the passageway to the basement of the church.

*Parish Home*

South of the hall is the single-story house occupied by the church's priest and his family. Completed in 1950, it originally stood nearer the church. It was expanded in the early 1960s when Father Dragicevich arrived to serve the congregation, bringing a large family. The building was moved further south in the early 1970s to open up a site for the new fellowship hall. The interior has been updated from time to time but the exterior is essentially as it was after the move.<sup>9</sup>

Like the hall, the walls of the parish home feature smooth-faced, variegated red brick. The building rests on a concrete-block foundation, painted red. The eaves of the hipped roof barely project beyond the walls. Two concrete steps and a stoop with ornamental, metal-spindle railings provide access to the front door, which has a semicircular transom. The door is in a projecting, gabled bay with small windows on its north and south sides. The entry bay is centered between two windows in the west facade. Windows are placed at irregular intervals on the other facades and are a mix of 1/1 sash, side-sliders, and fixed. All appear to be replacements. Window openings have header-brick sills. Concrete steps on the north side lead to a door near the center of that facade. A sliding patio door on the south side does not have an associated deck. The site drops at the rear, allowing access for a tuck-under garage.

*Integrity*

The property retains excellent integrity. The church and fellowship hall are in their original location and the parish home was moved to its current site during the period of significance.

The property retains strong integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. The exterior of the buildings has experienced only minor modification, such as the replacement of deteriorated doors and windows in the fellowship hall, since the end of the period of significance in 1973. The link between the church and the fellowship hall is largely below grade and set back from the street, minimizing its visibility. On the interior, the design of the main floor of the church and characteristic decorative features are essentially unchanged from when the iconostasis was completed in 1946. Painted canvases and icons continue to ornament the walls. The large chandelier suspended from the nave's ceiling replaced a similar but smaller chandelier in 1957, and the older chandelier was moved further west in the nave. Both enhance the architectural character of the interior. The congregation was not able to implement the full plan for stained-glass windows when the church was built but has

<sup>9</sup> "Beyond the Walls of the Church," in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

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traded the placeholder glass for stained-glass windows over time as funds became available. The final three windows in the north and south walls of the nave were inserted in the early 1960s. The stained-glass program was completed in 2002 when four windows were filled in the sanctuary and another four in the narthex/balcony walls. Regardless of vintage, the stained-glass windows were anticipated from the outset and are character-defining features of the church's design. The church basement, not a significant aspect of the building's design, was remodeled around the time the fellowship hall was added and likely dates from the property's period of significance.

St. George was built in a working-class residential neighborhood of small-scale houses, a setting that continues to surround it. The property's sustained integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and setting, as well as its continued role in perpetuating Serbian culture, reinforce St. George's integrity of feeling and association.

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Section number 8 Page 8**8. Statement of Significance****Architects/Builders**

Giliuson and Ellingsen (church and parish house architect)  
Ellingsen, Willeik Emil (church architect-principal in charge)  
DeNert, John (church general contractor)  
Jaridich, Mirko (iconostasis design)  
Scott Graff Company (iconostasis screen fabricator)  
Ericson, David (iconostasis icons)  
Thomas, John Ivey (fellowship hall architect)  
Risberg, Ray (fellowship hall contractor)

**Summary Paragraph**

St. George Serbian Orthodox Church has served the spiritual, cultural, and social needs of its community for a century. Erected in 1923-1924, it provided an important tie to the homeland for newly arrived Serbian immigrants. Members of the congregation helped build and operate industrial and other facilities that propelled Duluth's growth in the first half of the twentieth century, using some of their earnings to upgrade the church property. The most significant enhancement to the interior was the iconostasis, completed in 1946. The screen's icons were painted by David Ericson, an internationally renowned artist who spent his childhood in Duluth and returned regularly, finally moving back to the city a few years before his death. St. George's iconostasis was his last major work. Other significant improvements to the property were a new parish home finished in 1950 and a fellowship hall addition to the original building, dedicated in 1972.

As a well-preserved example of Byzantine Revival Style, the property is locally significant under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The period of significance is 1924 when the church building began hosting services. The property also qualifies under Criterion A for its significance in the area of European ethnic heritage, specifically its role in supporting and perpetuating Serbian immigrant culture. The period of significance begins with the church's completion in 1924 and ends in 1973, the National Register's fifty-year cutoff for properties that maintain their significance to the present day. Because the property is architecturally significant and historically important, it meets Criteria Consideration A for religious properties.

**History***Serbian Faith*

In the centuries after the death of Jesus, early Christians developed different interpretations of their faith that produced several denominations of Christianity. Serbian Orthodoxy is part of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Like other Christian denominations, it traces its roots to the work of the apostles of Jesus, who established churches grounded in a belief in the sacredness of certain sacraments. The churches at Constantinople (Istanbul), Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome, in turn, extended the faith by founding branches in other locations. A formal schism in 1054 resulted in the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic churches going their separate ways; the latter was further split in the sixteenth century by the Protestant Reformation.

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Prior to that time, common doctrines and other elements of the faith evolved through a series of Ecumenical Councils including the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, which focused on the highly controversial subject of the role of icons in worship. Iconoclasts, a church history explained, “were suspicious of religious art [and] demanded that the Church rid itself of such art.” Powerful adherents to this position included Byzantine Emperor Constantine V, who had banned icon veneration a few decades earlier. The other faction prevailed in the Second Council, though, issuing a proclamation:

We define that holy icons, whether in color, mosaic, or some other material, should be exhibited in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and liturgical vestments, on the walls, furnishings, and in houses and along the roads, namely the icons of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, that of our Lady the Theotokos, those of the venerable angels and those of all saintly people. Wherever these representations are contemplated, they will cause those who look at them to commemorate and love their prototype. We define also that they should be kissed and that they are an object of veneration and honor, but not of real worship, which is reserved for Him Who is the subject of our faith.<sup>10</sup>

A later source explained, “Icons are symbols, not idols.” They “are not simply portraits representing people, but graphic presentations of spiritual truths.”<sup>11</sup> Icons are central to the practice of Serbian Orthodoxy. The church recognizes Jesus as the highest priest, the “source of all power and authority in His Church.” He established a hierarchy, placing his apostles immediately below him. The next tier was occupied by the three levels of the Holy Priesthood. Based on practices of the apostles, “the laying of the hands is indispensable in the Holy Mystery of Priesthood. . . . For through the touch of hands in the Mystery, the spiritual power is communicated to the person ordained, and thus the lawful continuity of authority and ministry in the Church is secured.” Believers credit “the Holy Spirit, through the laying of hands of bishops, [as giving] grace and authority to the ordained bishop or priest to perform other Mysteries and to conduct the religious life of the people.”<sup>12</sup>

There are several levels within the priesthood. Bishops are at the top of the hierarchy and can confer priesthood and perform any of the sacraments. Priests are one level below bishops and cannot confer priesthood, but they can administer all of the other sacraments. Deacons assist both bishops and priests, but cannot perform any sacraments on their own. Others serving in specific roles in worship services are “readers (lectors), hypodeacons (sub-deacons), and deaconesses.”<sup>13</sup>

The Orthodox tradition adopts the Julian rather than the Gregorian calendar. Hence, Christmas is celebrated on January 7 and New Year’s Day is January 14. Serbian Orthodox congregations observe a number of other special days including St. Sava’s Day (Vidov-Dan) in June, marking the anniversary of the 1378 Battle of Blackbird Meadows in Kosovo.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> “The Orthodox Church, A Treasure,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was given the title Theotokos at the Third Ecumenical Council in 431, indicating that she bore both the divine and human natures of Jesus. Some had argued that Mary’s title should be Christotokos, “restrict[ing] her role to be only the mother of ‘Christ’s humanity’ and not his divine nature.” (“Theotokos,” Orthodox Wiki, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Theotokos>)

<sup>11</sup> SGSOC, “Explanation of Icons and the Iconostas,” brochure, ca. 2000, at Duluth-Churches-Orthodox file, Duluth Public Library.

<sup>12</sup> “The Mystery of the Holy Priesthood,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>13</sup> “The Mystery of the Holy Priesthood,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>14</sup> “Serbian Church Celebrates Fiftieth Anniversary,” *Duluth Herald*, June 25, 1973.

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Orthodox believers have been persecuted and sometimes killed for their faith by unsympathetic regimes. Some 20 million Orthodox believers are reported to have been killed in the twentieth century, particularly by Communist and Fascist governments. At the end of the twentieth century, though, it remained the second-largest Christian faith, claiming some 250 million members throughout the world, including around 6 million in America.<sup>15</sup>

*Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church*

Serbs evolved from the Slavic culture north of Carpathia. By the seventh century, a sizable group had moved north of the Danube River to the Balkan Peninsula, where their religious practices began to be influenced by Christianity. They were first referred to as “Serbs” in 822. Their society was organized by clans and the chief of one, Namanja, united most of the clans under his leadership before dying in 1196. One of his sons, Stephen, became the first Serbian king in 1217. Another son, Rastko, became the First Archbishop of the Autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church, newly independent from the Patriarch of Constantinople, in 1219. Earlier, upon becoming a monk, Rastko had changed his name to Sava. A history of St. George Church reported that “the Serbian nation has never produced a greater man than St. Sava. He is universally recognized as a Spiritual Father and Leader of the Serbian people.” Sava and his father, who also became a priest, established the Hilandar Monastery at Mount Athos in northern Greece. Hilandar joined a large complex of Orthodox monasteries at Mount Athos, which was populated by as many 7,500 monks at the beginning of the twentieth century and holds around 2,000 today. The Hilandar Monastery remains the spiritual center of the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>16</sup>

In the following centuries, the Serbian people would be periodically beset by war and physically divided by externally imposed boundaries. “To present the modern history of the entire Serbian people,” historian Michael Boro Petrovich explained, “the historian would have to weave together many different strands out of the history of the Ottoman Empire, Hungary, Croatia, Austria, and Venice, in whose lands the Serbs lived.” Even when lacking a country they could claim as their own, though, “they were bounded by ties that transcended political barriers. They shared the same Slavic language, which they wrote in the Cyrillic alphabet. They shared the same Orthodox religion, which they owed to the influence of Byzantium, and they owed allegiance to a Serbian Orthodox Church, which stood throughout several centuries of foreign domination as their common mother and only surviving vessel of their national unity.” Petrovich called the Serbian church “a cultural and quasi-political institution, which embodied and expressed the ethos of the Serbian people to such a degree that nationality and religion fused into a distinctive ‘Serbian faith.’”<sup>17</sup>

A major turning point in Serbian history came in 1389 when the Turks gained control of Serbian territory after a battle in Kosovo on Vidov-Dan, St. Vitus Day. Serbs continue to celebrate Vidov-Dan as a day of remembrance for the martyrs who died in that battle. The Serbs began an extended struggle for their independence from the Turks in 1804. Serbia became “an autonomous principality in 1829, an independent principality in 1878, and a

<sup>15</sup> “The Orthodox Church: A Treasure” and “The Orthodox Church: Coming to America,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>16</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, June 25, 26, 27, 1976, souvenir booklet (Duluth: by the church, 1976), 5; “Serbia and Serbian Orthodox Church” and “Hilandar and the Holy Mount Athos,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.; Michael Boro Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia, 1804-1918* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 1:4-5.

<sup>17</sup> Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia*, 1:xiv-xv, 10.

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kingdom in 1882,” Petrovich explained.<sup>18</sup>

Freedom from the Turks did not bring peaceful independence for the Serbs. As historian Wayne Vucinich observed, “The modern Serbian state from its very inception at the beginning of the nineteenth century was caught in the vise of the completing Austro-Hungarian and Russian imperialisms. . . . From 1878 to the end of the century Serbia for all intents and purposes existed as a political and economic enclave” of Austria-Hungary, even being forced to provide soldiers for the empire’s army. The royal family’s loyalties were divided, though, and palace intrigue contributed to Serbia’s instability during that period. When Alexander ascended to the throne after his father abdicated in 1889, he was not married, and his potential engagement to an Austro-Serbian princess would strengthen that tie. Instead, he married a Serbian commoner, an unpopular choice with Serbian royalty, military leaders, government officials, and the populace. A representative of the Russian tsar, Nicholas II, was his best man at the wedding in 1900, intensifying the contest of the international superpowers. The reign of the new queen, who became even more despised after the marriage, was short; she and the king were assassinated in 1903.

The government that followed was founded on a radical tradition that augured well for the lower classes but failed to deliver substantial economic benefits for most rural peasants, whose agricultural commodities were affected by trade wars with Austria-Hungary. According to Vucinich, while “the number of well-to-do peasants . . . grew” in the early twentieth century, “the number of families without land was growing.” On the other hand, industry was thriving. “From 1900 to 1910 the number of industrial enterprises increased from 153 to 465. The value of industrial production in the same period increased sevenfold.”<sup>19</sup>

Serbia’s continued political and economic turmoil led both displaced farmers and workers to consider moving beyond the country’s borders. In addition, many Serbs did not actually live in Serbia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That number “is difficult to ascertain because of inadequate statistics, boundary changes, migrations, and other demographic problems,” Petrovich noted, but “generally perhaps as many as a half of all Serbs lived in various lands outside of Serbia.”<sup>20</sup>

Some unification of the European population came after World War I when the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were combined in the nation of Yugoslavia, but European tensions soon led to World War II. Serbs “suffered terribly from internal enemies, Ustashi and Communists, and from Fascist and Nazist occupiers,” a history reported, and those associated with the Serbian Orthodox church were particularly targeted. By the end of World War II, 1.7 million Orthodox Serbs had been killed, including 4 bishops and 549 priests, and more than 330 Orthodox churches and 17 monasteries had been destroyed. Then, Serbia fell within the Soviet Union, which continued to discourage religious practices.<sup>21</sup>

Given the troubles in their homeland, it is not surprising that Serbs began emigrating to the United States by the mid-nineteenth century. The first decade of the twentieth century saw a major surge in immigration, bringing some 110,000 Serbs to America. Most were men who planned to spend a few years working in the New World,

<sup>18</sup> Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia*, xiii.

<sup>19</sup> Wayne S. Vucinich, *Serbia between East and West: The Events of 1903-1908* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1954), v, 1-12, 56-59, 235-236; Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia*, xiii.

<sup>20</sup> Vucinich, *Serbia between East and West*, v; Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia*, xiii.

<sup>21</sup> Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia*, xiii; SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 5; “Serbia and Serbian Orthodox Church,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

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then return to resume their lives in Serbia bolstered by their savings. By the 1910s, many had changed their minds about returning to their homeland. Those who had wives or girlfriends in Serbia brought them to America, while unattached men looked for Serbian women in their new communities. While nearly 10 percent returned for military service during World War I, the population of Serbs on this side of the Atlantic continued to increase.<sup>22</sup>

For mutual support, the new arrivals established churches and benevolent societies; the latter subsequently joined forces as the Serbian National Federation (Srpski Narodni Savez). Serbian-American historian Samuel Bojanic asserted that “the lodges and churches were almost synonymous, just like Serbianism and Orthodoxy in the Old Country.” He continued, “This is one of many examples of a recurrent sociological phenomenon characteristic of the pioneer Serbian-American: the Serbian national character (i.e., the customs, traditions brought over from the Old Country) and the Eastern Orthodox religious practices and faith were so intertwined, that even [as] the Serbians became Americanized, the Serbian Orthodox ‘way of life’ lived on in the New World and enriched the American culture. In this manner, the religious spirit and ideals of St. Sava and our church forefathers were transmitted down through the centuries as a legacy to our people.” As a writer observed in 1951, Serbians are “a strongly religious people” and “the church is the focal point of many of their activities.”<sup>23</sup>

Christian orthodoxy had been introduced to North America in the mid-eighteenth century when the Russian Imperial Navy arrived in the Aleutian Islands and Alaska. A Russian Orthodox mission was established on Kodiak Island in 1794. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were also Russian Orthodox congregations in San Francisco and New York and a Greek Orthodox congregation in New Orleans. As the number of adherents grew, the diocesan see moved from Sitka, Alaska, where it had been established in 1839, to San Francisco in 1872.<sup>24</sup>

The country’s first Serbian Orthodox church, St. Sava, appeared in 1894 in Jackson, California, a center of the gold-mining industry. This was followed a year later by the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen in Galveston, Texas, originally a mission of the Russian Orthodox Church. Soon other Serbian Orthodox churches appeared in the industrial towns of Butte, Montana, McKeesport, Pennsylvania, and Steelton, Pennsylvania, as well as Chicago.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 6; “History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church,” in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, June 23-24, 1973, souvenir booklet (Duluth: by the church, 1973), n.p.

<sup>23</sup> Samuel Bojanic, “History of St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church of Steelton, PA (1903-1978),” St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.stnicholassteelton.org/parishhistory>; Herbert Coleman, “It’s Serbian New Year’s,” *Duluth News Tribune*, January 14, 1951.

<sup>24</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 4; “The Orthodox Church: Coming to America,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>25</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 6; “About Us,” Saints Constantine and Helen Serbian Orthodox Church, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://orthodoxgalveston.org/>; “About,” St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church, accessed March 7, 2022, <https://www.stsavapa.org/>; “About Us,” Holy Trinity Orthodox Church (Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate), accessed March 7, 2022, <https://holytrinitybutte.org/aboutus>; Bojanic, “History of St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church.” St. Sava was listed in the National Register in 1986. Historians associated with St. Nicholas in Steelton assert that congregation is one of the country’s three oldest, claiming that the Galveston church was originally a Russian Orthodox mission. St. Nicholas built a new church in 1968. St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, just outside of Pittsburgh, claims to be the third-oldest Serbian Orthodox church in the United States. At some point, probably in the mid-twentieth century, it moved from its original edifice to a new church. The congregation of Holy Trinity in Butte built a new building in 1965; the first church was demolished because of structural damage resulting from underground mining.



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Serbian Orthodox churches in the United States came under the administration of the Russian Orthodox Church in America in 1905. “Though this arrangement gave the Serbian churches a degree of organization,” a history observed, “the parishioners and clergy were not happy.” The Serbian Diocese gained independence in 1921 with creation of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America. The church acquired over thirty acres of land at Libertyville, Illinois, where it built its headquarters, the St. Sava Monastery, in the late 1920s.<sup>26</sup>

In the 1960s, the Serbian Diocese was rocked by a schism centered around Dionisije Milivojevich, who had become bishop of the Serbian Diocese in 1940 and was defrocked by the church’s Holy Assembly of Bishops in 1964. The subsequent conflict did “irreparable damage . . . to the Orthodox faith and to the Serbian name” for nearly thirty years, according to a history of St. George’s church. Work to mend the schism began in the early 1990s, with reunification accomplished in 1998.<sup>27</sup>

*Serbs in Duluth*

Serbs arrived on the Iron Range in the late nineteenth century, founding Minnesota’s first Serbian Orthodox congregation, St. Vasilije’s, in Chisholm. When a large wave of Serbs came to the United States in the first decade of the twentieth century, many landed in Duluth, either coming directly from Europe or reaching there after stopping in other locations first. A history noted that “most of the Duluth Serbs came from the province of Lika, although there were a number of early settlers from Crna Gora (Montenegro) and Hercegovina, as well as Bosnia and other provinces.” Mandatory military service in areas controlled by Austro-Hungary motivated some men to leave their homeland, but most were driven by economic forces.<sup>28</sup>

The language barrier and their lesser status as recent arrivals consigned most immigrants to entry-level jobs in construction and at factories, railroads, and logging operations. Many found work building the Thomson Dam on the Saint Louis River, a project completed in 1907. Even more opportunities were provided by U.S. Steel, which required legions of laborers to build a massive plant in Duluth for its subsidiary, the Minnesota Steel Company, starting in 1913. After the plant began operation, it was the area’s dominant employer. The primary products of its blast furnaces and fabricating machines were wire, fencing, fence posts, and nails. Byproducts of the process were repurposed into cement at the adjacent kilns of the Universal Portland Cement Company, another U.S. Steel enterprise.<sup>29</sup>

Many Serbs reconsidered their plans to stay in America for only a short time. They began putting down roots and brought family members from Serbia to join them. Some settled in Gary, which shared the name of the industrial Indiana city that received the first carload of steel shipped from the Duluth mill in December 1915 (Figure 1). Minnesota’s Gary, along with neighboring New Duluth and Morgan Park, anchored the southwest end of Duluth,

<sup>26</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 6; “The Serbian Orthodox Church in America,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>27</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 6; “The Serbian Orthodox Church in America,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>28</sup> Anne Crooks, “A Faith for All Seasons,” *Lake Superior Magazine* 8, no. 6 (November-December 1986): 72; SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 7.

<sup>29</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 7; Linda Hanson, “Appeal of Bells: Tradition of Ringing Bells Continues at St. George,” *Duluth News Tribune*, May 24, 2003; “Aspects of Steel Plant History,” transcribed letter from Nick Maxim to Helen and Bob Sebastian, February 3, 1994, at SGC.

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a polyglot of communities that stretched for miles along the Saint Louis River and Lake Superior.<sup>30</sup>

Each enclave had its distinct character. Construction started in August 1913 on Morgan Park, U.S. Steel's model community for employees of the Minnesota Steel Company, and "within two years [it] was a complete and self-contained city," a contemporary publication reported. "Morgan Park has neither saloons, nor slums; everybody who lives in it is prosperous."<sup>31</sup>

New Duluth was considered "the Lungs of the Steel-making Center" while Gary was "the Hub of the Steel Plant." The mill's blast furnaces were an easy walk from Commonwealth Avenue, the main commercial artery of both communities. In an article in the *Duluth News-Tribune* in 1916, John Monger described Gary's "wide-spread building site, intersected by Commonwealth Avenue, which is paved with concrete, and on which electrically operated street cars will be running, connecting up this whole district with that of Greater Duluth. . . . Gary has a well-built business section, many of the stores being . . . up-to-date brick and concrete structures . . . while there are miles of cement walks and the best of roadbeds leading to all sections." A contemporary noted that the community already "possessed a bank, a \$30,000 hotel, a theatre, and a newspaper." A resident who moved to Gary in 1919 recalled at that time "you heard more foreign languages—southern European languages—than you would hear the American language."<sup>32</sup>

Following the pattern of nineteenth-century Serbs on the West Coast, Duluth Serbs established several benevolent societies, which later merged as Holy Trinity, an affiliate of the Serbian National Federation. St. Trinity Lodge No. 75 would have a long, close relationship with the Serbian Orthodox church that was soon to appear in Gary.<sup>33</sup>

*Founding a New Church*

Ministry to Orthodox Serbs in Duluth was initially done by Serbian, Russian, and Romanian Orthodox missionaries and priests from the Chisholm parish. Services were usually held in private homes. Duluth's concentration of Serbs drew the attention of the Serbian Orthodox hierarchy, who discussed the need to send a priest there during a meeting in Chicago in 1916. The local community wanted a church to maintain both religious practices and ties to their heritage. "Our early Serbian immigrants were nostalgic for their homeland and the customs and traditions they grew up with in their homeland," a historical account observed. "This sense of nostalgia especially increased on feasts such as Bozic-Christmas and their Krsna Slava-Patron Saint's Day. . . . They wanted to have a place to worship God, to baptize their children, to teach their children about their faith and traditions, and to pray for their loved ones who departed this life." The initial push to establish a Serbian Orthodox church in Duluth, though, came to naught.<sup>34</sup>

Finally in 1923, Father Vladimir Porobich succeeded in assembling the nucleus of a new congregation in Gary. The group elected to dedicate the church to St. George. Born about 275 AD in Armenia to a wealthy family with

<sup>30</sup> Walter Van Brunt, *Duluth and St. Louis County, Minnesota* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1921), 1:294, 314.

<sup>31</sup> Van Brunt, *Duluth*, 1:313.

<sup>32</sup> Van Brunt, *Duluth*, 1:313-314 (the Monger article is quoted on page 313); Chris Thompson, "Leaders See Name Change First Step Toward New Image," *Duluth News Tribune*, February 15, 1989.

<sup>33</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 7; "Parish Activities," in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; SGSOC, *Fortieth Anniversary and Vidov-dan Celebration*, June 29-30, 1963, souvenir booklet (Duluth: by the church, 1963), 1.

<sup>34</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 7; "History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church," in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; "Our Parish Priests," in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifty Anniversary*, n.p.

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roots in Cappadocia (Asia Minor), George served in the Roman Army under the Emperor Diocletian. George's Christian faith became an issue for the emperor, who beheaded him after torture proved unsuccessful in convincing George to renounce his faith. George's martyrdom led to his sainthood.<sup>35</sup>

Before the congregation had its own building, some meetings continued to be held in private homes, where baptisms were commonly done. The group also rented a building "next door to the Vukosav Grocery Store" on the 1400 block of 99<sup>th</sup> Street West, an elderly member recalled decades later. They soon purchased a site for a new edifice half a mile away, on the southeast corner of West Gary Street and 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, in a residential district a few blocks west of the commercial corridor of Commonwealth Avenue. The congregation claimed an income of \$278 in May 1923 and had raised \$2,375 by August 12, when the site for the church was dedicated. "These gifts came not only from our own Serbian people," a church history explained, "but also from our Russian and Romanian families." The parish recorded its first marriage on October 28.<sup>36</sup>

Plans for the church building were prepared by a Duluth architecture firm, Giliuson and Ellingsen. Ephraim C. Giliuson was born to Swedish immigrants who moved to Duluth from Stillwater, Minnesota, in 1891 when he was three years old. Giliuson attended Duluth public schools and the Duluth Business University. In 1903, he became an apprentice in the office of prominent Duluth architect John J. Wangenstein. Four years later, he left Duluth to study at the Art Institute of Chicago, returning to Wangenstein's office in 1909. He was briefly a partner in that practice but established his own firm with Anthony Puck in 1913. In the 1920s, he left Puck and teamed up with Willeik Emil Ellingsen. Ellingsen, the main point of contact for the St. George's project, was born in Norway in 1891, relocated with his family to Duluth around 1907, and received a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Minnesota in 1917. After working as a draftsman for several years at two leading architectural practices in the Twin Cities—C. H. Johnson, and Croft and Boerner—he became a principal in the firm Ellingsen and Erickson in 1922. The firm reorganized as Giliuson, Ellingsen and Erickson in 1926 and Giliuson and Erickson in 1929. At some point after Giliuson died in 1947, Ellingsen removed Giliuson's name from the practice. Among the projects the firm completed were a service building at the Nopemeng Sanitarium (1929) and the Northwest Bank of Commerce (1939) in Duluth. Ellingsen was credited with designing the Flame Restaurant and Store (1955) and Trinity Lutheran Church Sunday School Building (1954) in Duluth and a school in Hermantown (1953).<sup>37</sup>

General contractor John DeNert got to work quickly when the plans for the church were ready. The cornerstone-laying ceremony on September 30 generated enthusiasm and donations, with church coffers increasing by \$1,061 that day. Local businesses, including U.S. Steel and affiliated companies, supported the project with money and other assistance. One source reported that when the church was under construction, "U.S. Steel lifted the church bells with a crane, installing them in the bell tower." This aid was not completely altruistic. The businesses

<sup>35</sup> "History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church," in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; "The Great Martyr St. George," in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>36</sup> "Remembering my Parents," *St. George's Church Seventy-fifth Anniversary Newsletter* 1, no. 9 (July 1998): 1; "History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church" and "Church Architecture," in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; "History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church," in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>37</sup> "History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church," in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; entries for Willeik Ellingsen and Ephraim Giliuson in Alan Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 68, 82; entry for Willeik Emil Ellingsen in *American Architects Directory, 1956*, first ed. (n.p.: R. R. Bowker, 1955), 155. The architects' office was at 217 Torrey Building according to plans for the residence.

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benefitted from having a stable workforce, and churches and other family-oriented activities helped to keep workers in line.<sup>38</sup>

“It is not clear from church records when the church was completed nor when the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the new building,” a church history concluded. The records show, though, that the first child was baptized in the church on June 29, 1924, and the bells were installed in the tower the same year. Finishing touches—or at least payment for some of the work—stretched into 1925 and 1926, when multiple payments to St. Germain Bros. for glass and Engler and Olson for furniture were documented in church ledgers. The exterior of the church would remain virtually unchanged for decades (Figures 2 and 3).<sup>39</sup>

*Making the Best of Hard Times*

Men at St. George’s who worked at the steel and cement plants had reason to complain about conditions in the first years of operation. As one source related, “The men were ‘slaves’ to the job as the prescribed work hours were for the most part 10 hour days and 14 hour nights” in departments like the open hearth, rolling mill, and coke plant that operated 24/7. Other departments ran day and night weekdays, but shut down on weekends. When the Great Depression hit, however, the workers faced another harsh reality, unemployment. The blast furnace and coke plant were the first to shut down, followed by the open hearth and rolling mills. “Many Gary-New Duluth workers were laid off, regardless of seniority,” a worker reported. It was during this period that union organizers made progress. After things started picking up at the mill later in the 1930s, an eight-hour day became the norm.<sup>40</sup>

Like its congregants, the church did not come through the depression unscathed. “The rather small parish started out with a large debt,” *Steel Plant News* reported. By the mid-1930s, many members were not able to keep up with their pledges. The church recorded only twenty-three pledges in 1938 and few were current. A lack of cashflow led to the foreclosure of a mortgage on the church’s property. By the early 1940s, with the world war stimulating the American economy, the congregation launched a campaign to redeem the property. When that raised only part of the total needed, some members personally signed a note for the remaining balance. “A number of parishioners signed a note at one of the banks in a substantial amount,” their attorney reported, which enabled the property’s title to be transferred to a new corporation established by the congregation in January 1942. This bought time, but did not solve the problem. “These individuals are not hopeful that they are going to be able to get sufficient funds to take care of that note as practically everyone who signed it also contributed very substantially to the campaign for funds,” the attorney wrote, seeking donations from local companies to pay down the bank note. The U.S. Steel Corporation stepped up with the biggest contribution, \$1,500, while the American Steel and Wire Company, Oliver Mining Company, and Duluth, Missabe and Iron Range Railway each chipped in \$500.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Quote from Steve Balach, “Treasures from Our Past,” *St. George’s Church Seventy-fifth Anniversary Newsletter* 1, no. 9 (July 1998): 2. See also “History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church,” in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; SGSOC, *Fortieth Anniversary*, 1.

<sup>39</sup> “History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church” and “Church Architecture,” in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; “History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.; St. George ledger, entries for 1925 and 1925, pages 300-301, at SGC.

<sup>40</sup> “Aspects of Steel Plant History,” transcribed letter from Nick Maxim to Helen and Bob Sebastian, February 3, 1994, at SGC.

<sup>41</sup> “St. George Orthodox Parish Celebrates Twenty-fifth Anniversary,” *Steel Plant News*, August 28, 1948; 1930s entries in St. George ledger book (first entry on May 27, 1923), at SGC; Thomas Doyle to Interlake Iron Corporation, letter, February 20, 1942, SGC; Certificate of Incorporation, St. George’s Serbian Orthodox Church, filed for record January 31, 1942, at

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The efforts of the congregation and their attorney were successful. The attorney submitted a statement for services to the church in March that included “the legal work of having a new trustee appointed, putting through the sale of the property, organizing a new corporation, having the property transferred to that corporation, settl[ing] [a] claim against property for [a] paving assessment, and obtaining [a] new certificate of title showing that the new church corporation now owns the property free and clear from all encumbrances.” This experience undoubtedly influenced decisions in subsequent decades as the church considered expanding its facilities. The debt might have also been the reason the church was not formally consecrated until August 23, 1942.<sup>42</sup>

While the 1930s was time of much hardship, some good came out of this difficult period. A tall hill of sand directly north of the church that rose “as high as the church’s window tops” was removed in 1934. Men with horses, wagons, and shovels accomplished the work in a week by hand, with the congregation’s women providing meals to the workers. “Passersby on the newly paved Beck’s Road [north of Gary Street] could now see the beauty of St. George,” a church history proclaimed.<sup>43</sup>

Dancing provided an escape from the hard times and an opportunity to socialize. Starting in 1929, the church hosted dances (Zabavas) every month except during Lent. “The last dance before Lent was called Poklade, a lively Masquerade with costumes and masks. Prizes were given out. A local group “played ‘romantic’ dance music and polkas” at the early dances because the community did not have a traditional Serbian band, known as a tamburitza. Folk songs and the instruments that accompanied singers were an important aspect of Serbian culture. “Most of the larger Serb communities were fortunate in that some of the newcomers were Tamburashi” but the “Gary-New Duluth colony was not so fortunate,” according to a local resident.<sup>44</sup>

The church finally gained a group, the Serbian Melody Troubadores [*sic*], in 1937. “How these young men raised enough money to buy five instruments in the middle of the Great Depression is still a profound mystery,” the resident observed. Players cycled through the band over time and, in the 1960s and 1970s, it became a three-piece ensemble known as “Stari Becari.” The group was reorganized as the four-person “Novi Stari Becari” in the 1980s, which was disbanded in 1996. In the meantime, a youth band, the Junior Tamburitza Group, formed in the 1960s and later evolved into the all-girl Devojacki Tamburitza Orchestra and other ensembles. For large events, the church often brought in nationally known Serbian music groups to perform.<sup>45</sup>

Music also played an important role in church services. Many parts were sung or chanted by the priest and sometimes required a response, which was historically “sung by the ‘pojac’ . . . and parishioners who knew the melodies and prayers followed along.” In 1941, St. George’s priest and some congregants established a choir. After practicing for a period of time, the choir made a preview appearance at the Serbian Orthodox church in

SGC.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas J. Doyle to Dan Bogdanovich, letter, March 3, 1942, at SGC; “History of the St. George Serbian Orthodox Church,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p..

<sup>43</sup> “The Sand Hill,” in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p. That site is now paved and serves as a parking lot for the church.

<sup>44</sup> “Treasures from Our Past,” *St. George’s Church Seventy-fifth Anniversary Newsletter* 1, no. 4 (February 1998): 2; untitled, undated, hand-written document (first line: “They arrived by boat, filed through Ellis Island”), at SGC. The tradition of the Poklade continued into the 1970s.

<sup>45</sup> Untitled, undated, hand-written document, at SGC.

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Crosby-Ironton before its debut at St. George's the following week. A year later, the choir expanded its repertoire and began performing concerts in addition to singing at services. In 1957, the choir was honored by induction into the Serbian Singing Federation. When the choir celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its membership in 2007, five members had been singing with the group since before it joined the federation. "We're very proud of our heritage," an octogenarian singer said. "That's what keeps the choir going here."<sup>46</sup>

*Installing the Iconostasis*

In Serbian Orthodox churches, a screen known as an iconostasis separates the sacred area surrounding the altar from the nave, and much of the service takes place behind this screen, which is traditionally ornamented with icons and other symbols. St. George's congregation could not afford an elaborate screen when the church opened and worshiped without one for more than two decades. The push to install a screen became more pressing after the church was consecrated in 1942, and it became more feasible with the prosperity generated by local industries during World War II. During the war, Minnesota Steel alone employed some four-thousand people at the mill and related facilities.<sup>47</sup>

By the mid-1940s, church leaders were trying various strategies to raise money to commission an iconostasis. A certificate with a gold-embossed seal featuring St. George on his horse acknowledged that the church's president, Paul Igich, and another congregant, Casey Koban, "are duly authorized to collect any free will donation for erection [of] a new sanctuary (Ikonostas) and set of the holy pictures." The certificate, dated September 5, 1945, was signed by the church's priest and the board secretary, who "appeal[ed] to all good givers, believers and benefactors. . . . Any donations will be gratefully received and personally appreciated. God bless you all givers."<sup>48</sup>

The appeals were productive, allowing the project to proceed. Mirko Jaridich prepared a model of the iconostasis. An elevation based on the model was drawn by an architect, probably the church's designer, W. E. Ellingsen (Figure 4). Because the iconostasis was symmetrical, the drawing detailed only half the screen. For a blueprint to guide the screen's fabrication, a mirror image was reproduced for the other half. The blueprint, labeled "Order #3031," was dated April 30, 1945.<sup>49</sup>

The church hired the Scott Graff Company to fabricate the structural components of the iconostasis. Graff's letterhead proclaimed the company's business as "manufacturers and wholesalers [of] high grade mill work, cabinet work, and lumber." In a bid submitted on July 16, 1945, the company proposed to make the structure "in sections as large as practicable" and specified:

All woodwork to be kiln dried Pine for paint.  
Columns fluted with Greek Ionic Caps.  
Stalite Nuwood insulation board for back of screen (or Altar side).  
Main doors to be of wood scrolled to design same or similar to details.

<sup>46</sup> "St. George's First Church Choir," in *St. George's Church Seventy-fifth Anniversary Newsletter* 1, no. 4 (February 1998): 1; "Serbian Singing Society, 1957-1998," in SGSOC, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary*, n.p.; Linda Hanson, "St. George Serbian Orthodox Church Choir Celebrates Fifty Years of Making Music," *Duluth News Tribune*, October 6, 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Maxim, "Aspects of Steel Plant History."

<sup>48</sup> Certificate, September 8, 1945, at SGC.

<sup>49</sup> Blueprint at SGC. The blueprint included the name J. Olson; Olson's role is unknown.

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Rough framework structural supports or lumber K.D., material only, to be erected by others.  
We will furnish details for the erection work.

Tie-rods, bolts, and other hardware to brace the structure were not included. A \$110 deduction from the \$1,980 bid would be allowed if metal doors, supplied by others, were substituted for the wood scrolled doors. The screen had been delivered by December 27, 1945, when Graff issued a receipt for payment of \$1,934.50. Graff later produced two pulpits made of pine birch panels, "one right hand and one left hand, complete with platforms," and invoiced the church \$116.50 for that work in May 1946.<sup>50</sup>

While Graff was producing the structure, artist David Ericson was at work on the most important feature of the screen, the icons. Ericson was born in Sweden and came to Duluth as a young boy with his family in 1873. They settled on Minnesota Point, a sandbar separating Saint Louis Bay from Lake Superior, where he was inspired by the nature that surrounded him. He also faced hardship: his right leg was amputated when he was eleven. By that time, he had shown artistic talent and was mentored by a young woman, Emilie Sargent, who would later marry prominent Duluth businessman Frederic W. Paine, and C. F. Johnson, owner of a book and stationery store. The Paines were among Ericson's early patrons. In 1885, at the age of sixteen, he won a gold medal at a Minnesota State Fair competition for a large oil painting titled "Salting the Sheep."<sup>51</sup>

Two years later, the eighteen-year-old headed to New York to study at the Art Students League. In April 1889, the *Duluth Evening Herald* noted that Ericson had returned from New York "to Duluth for the summer. He has made rapid progress in his studies and now is looked upon as one of the promising young artists of the metropolis. His many Duluth friends expect great things of [him] in the future and he is determined not to disappoint them." A biography noted that he was in New York for three years "working principally under the direction of William Merritt Chase, Kenyon Cox, and Harry Mowbray. To support himself he did some designing of jewelry for Tiffany and illustrating for St. Nicolas Magazine and the Youth's Companion. His studio was located in a popular artists', sculptors' and writers' neighborhood on East Twenty-third Street, and he numbered among his good friends such men as Stephen Crane, John Henry Twachtman, and Edward Dufner."<sup>52</sup>

Process from the sale of his paintings allowed him to travel to Europe, where he maintained a base in Paris for three years and studied under James McNeill Whistler. An article in *American Art News* noted that Ericson "was one of the few Americans who was a pupil of Whistler in Paris, and his pictures are delightfully reminiscent of his master, especially in the purity of their color." When he returned to Duluth for the summer in 1902, the *Duluth Evening Herald* reported, "He has two works on exhibition in the Paris salon and that means much, for it takes a high order of talent to be allowed space there. One of his paintings represents 'The Nativity,' and is 6 by 9 feet in size and contains eleven figures. It has been very favorably commented upon by the art critics of a number of the French journals." The article noted that in the fall he would make New York City "his permanent home, that city

<sup>50</sup> Proposal from Scott Graff Company for iconostasis millwork, July 16, 1945, at SCC; receipt from Graff for iconostasis, December 27, 1945, AT SGC; invoice from Graff for pulpits, May 21, 1946, at SGC.

<sup>51</sup> William G. Boyce, *David Ericson* (Duluth: Tweed Gallery, University of Minnesota, Duluth, 1963), 4-7; Lula Merrick, "The Art of David Ericson," *International Studio*, February 1924, 419; Earl Finberg, "Ericson: Duluth's Revered Painter," *Duluth News Tribune*, July 21, 1946; "Axel David Ericson," in Robert L. Crump, *Minnesota Prints and Printmakers, 1900-1945* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009), 83.

<sup>52</sup> Boyce, *David Ericson*, 7-8; "Personal," *Duluth Evening Herald*, April 26, 1889.

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offering a better field than almost any other in the country.”<sup>53</sup>

He married Susan Barnard, also a painter, in 1903. They lived in New York City, Buffalo, and Europe, landing in Provincetown, Massachusetts, on the eve of World War I. “For inspiration and artistic atmosphere,” he told the *Duluth Herald* in 1916, “the little colony at Provincetown is rivaled only by that of Paris.” Ericson continued to work for his early patrons, including the Congdon family. Around 1917, he completed “a striking portrait of the late Chester A. Congdon,” the *Duluth Herald* reported. “Mr. Ericson spent many months on this work, which is a three-quarters portrait, almost life size, and it is receiving much favorable comment for the remarkable likeness and the exquisite work which has gone into it.” Another prominent local commission was for six large murals for the Hibbing High School.<sup>54</sup>

He was based in Paris for many of the years between the world wars. According to a newspaper profile published in 1930, he had exhibited at “the Paris art salon fifteen times. His paintings have also been shown at art centers at Gothenburg, Sweden; New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Chicago. . . . Among the honors awarded him were a gold medal, France; [and] a silver medal at the Saint Louis Exposition.”<sup>55</sup>

With World War II on the horizon, Ericson and his wife returned to Provincetown, where she died in 1941. At the urging of friends, Ericson moved back to Duluth, where he taught at the Duluth Art Institute and completed commissions. One of the largest was initiated on August 11, 1945, when Ericson and representatives of St. George’s signed an agreement for “twenty-four hand oil painted on canvas base pictures of Orthodox Church Style subjects of Saints, . . . selected and approved by [St. George’s], the hallows filled with the gold pigment.” The agreement called for:

- a) Six pictures of different subject and titles will be in size each 5 feet 9 inches tall and 2 feet 6 inches wide.
- b) Two pictures 4 feet 8 inches tall and 2 feet 9 inches wide.
- c) Four pictures of round shape 12 inches in diameter each.
- d) Two pictures of oval shape, each 2 feet tall and 1 foot wide.
- e) One picture of Lord Supper 5 feet 6 inches wide and 2 feet tall.
- f) One picture of Holy Trinity 5 feet 6 inches wide and 4 feet 9 inches tall.
- g) Eight pictures each 4 feet 11 inches tall and 2 feet 6 inches wide.

Ericson would provide “the Holy Pictures painting as the First class Job, ready pasted on the shaped panels” that St. George’s supplied. His total fee was \$1,500, with \$500 paid at the time the agreement was signed and the rest

<sup>53</sup> “Among the Artists,” *American Art News*, 4, no. 14 (January 13, 1906): 3; “Returns from Paris,” *Duluth Evening Herald*, June 11, 1902.

<sup>54</sup> “David Ericson Returns to Duluth,” *Duluth Herald*, December 5, 1916; “Ericson Portrait of Chester A. Congdon,” *Duluth Herald*, February 22, 1917; *David Ericson: Always Returning, the Life and Work of a Duluth Cultural Icon* (Duluth: Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth, 2005); Boyce, *David Ericson*, 9; Merrick, “The Art of David Ericson,” 420; “Warm Tribute Paid to the Genius of David Ericson and His Murals for the New Hibbing High School, by New York Critic,” *Duluth Herald*, January 18, 1924.

<sup>55</sup> Boyce, *David Ericson*, 10; Finberg, “Ericson”; “Duluth Artist Realizes His Boyhood Ambitions,” *Duluth Herald*, May 27, 1930.



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due when the paintings were completed (Figure 5).<sup>56</sup>

Ericson apparently did the work at his studio in the Dodge Building at 405 East Superior Street (demolished) in downtown Duluth. A hand-written note from the artist dated January 1, 1946, acknowledged payment in full of \$1,500 “for 24 panels—oil paintings of Saints.” It was his final major commission. On December 5, 1946, the seventy-eight-year-old was hit by a car and died soon thereafter. In a eulogy at Ericson’s funeral, Reverend Homer Armstrong said: “How fitting it was that his last extensive bit of painting consisted of the recently complete series of twenty-four altar pictures in the Serbian Orthodox Church of Gary. This, I think, was a prophetic ending of his life and career—an act of adoration and worship of God.”<sup>57</sup>

After the iconostasis was assembled, the Salmio and Dahlberg Company, painting contractors, began the process of finishing it. In March 1946, the company sent the church an invoice for \$378.25 that included 163 hours of labor at \$1.75 an hour and \$10 for materials for “marbleizing of ornamental work in the church,” plus \$45 for “gold leaf work on arch” and \$38 for “gold leaf work on doors.” Another \$295.25 for gold leaf work was not included in the invoice’s total. A note explained: “The gilding of doors is not included in this bill as we have been unable to obtain gold leaf up to this time. As soon as we can get the same we will finish the job already started.”<sup>58</sup>

When Salmio and Dahlberg completed the painting, the icon canvases were placed on the screen. The congregation celebrated the consecration of the iconostasis on August 11, 1946.<sup>59</sup>

Other elements of the church interior were upgraded in the following years. In August 1948, a new chandelier was dedicated during a celebration of the congregation’s twenty-fifth anniversary. It is unclear if this fixture was installed in the nave or over the altar.<sup>60</sup> In any event, the fixture in the nave was replaced by a larger one in 1957 when the church received a bequest of \$3,000 for a new chandelier for the nave. It was ordered from the Papageorge Jewelry Company in New York, which described the 7.5-foot-high fixture in detail in a letter to the church in March 1957: “At the very top of the chandelier is a gilt crown garnished with large crystal drops, and from the top ring hangs a double cascade of genuine graduated crystals. The bottom of the chandelier finishes in a large light-glittering bowl shape with a large crystal ball at the end. There are three rows of lights on the exterior for a total of 48 and an additional 14 interior lights. Crystals also hang from these fixtures.” The letter added that “the chandelier is made in the Orthodox style out of brass and is gilt plated throughout.” While the retail price

<sup>56</sup> Boyce, *David Ericson*, 10; signed agreement between St. George’s and David Ericson, August 11, 1945, at SGC; Finberg, “Ericson”; “Duluth Deaths: Mrs. David Ericson,” *Duluth News Tribune*, November 16, 1941.

<sup>57</sup> Signed agreement between St. George’s and David Ericson, August 11, 1945, at SGC; Boyce, *David Ericson*, 11; “David Ericson, Noted Duluth Artist, Dies of Car Injuries,” *Duluth News Tribune*, December 16, 1946; Homer J. Armstrong, memorial talk at service for David Ericson, typescript, December 21, 1946, at University of Minnesota-Duluth, Archives and Special Collections; “Ericson Display Slated at UMD,” *Duluth News Tribune*, September 29, 1963; “Ericson Art Exhibit,” *Duluth News Tribune*, October 14, 1963. The Tweed Gallery at the University of Minnesota-Duluth has a large collection of Ericson’s paintings and sketches and has organized several exhibits of his work. William Boyce, an assistant professor of art at the university and the Tweed’s curator, completed a monograph on Ericson’s life and career in 1963 at the time of a major retrospective. The Tweed published a book in conjunction with an exhibit in 2005, *David Ericson, Always Returning: The Life and Work of a Duluth Cultural Icon*.

<sup>58</sup> Invoice from Salmio and Dahlberg Company, March 6, 1946, at SGC.

<sup>59</sup> “Church Architecture,” in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>60</sup> “St. George Orthodox Parish Celebrates Twenty-fifth Anniversary.”

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was \$2,035, the company offered to sell it to the church for \$1,900. In April, the church sent a \$750 deposit to the company, which promised to have the order completed “in about 12 weeks.” The fixture the new chandelier replaced was moved west to light the balcony.<sup>61</sup>

*A Parish Home of Their Own*

St. George rented houses for its priests and their families until the late 1940s when the congregation decided to build a parish home on the lot directly south of the church. Architects Giliuson and Ellingsen were again called on to prepare plans, which were issued August 26, 1949. The cornerstone for the building was laid and dedicated on October 9. Several days earlier, the church had hired contractor Peter Glusac to erect the building. Construction did not go smoothly. Apparently Glusac retained Eli Kovich as a subcontractor. The church hoped the house would be done by Christmas, but the work dragged into 1950. In April, Ellingsen wrote to Kovich, following up on a February letter listing “a number of items which had to be completed before final acceptance” of the new building. “Since that time, I have made several inspections of the residence, but have always found the work incomplete.” Among the issues were doors that were defective or did not function properly, kitchen cabinets that were improperly installed, window screens that were missing, and glass-block windows that were inadequately caulked. Oak floors needed another coat of varnish, and the concrete floor in the garage was unfinished. In addition, the “basement stair is dangerously weak and should be reinforced with another horse in the center.”<sup>62</sup>

While Ellingsen allowed that weather may have restricted work on exterior items, “the delay . . . in the completion of the interior work has reached the limit of endurance of both the church committee and ourselves.” Ellingsen gave Kovich a May 1 deadline to finish the work or the church would hire other craftsmen and assess the cost to Kovich. He urged Kovich, though, “not [to] attempt to do any of this work yourself, but hire a first class carpenter. There has been enough poor workmanship to date, and we believe the church is entitled to a couple days work by a first class mechanic.” The permanent residence for the priest and his family was finally dedicated August 27, 1950 (Figure 6).<sup>63</sup>

There were also campaigns to upgrade the church during this period. Prompted by the building’s thirtieth anniversary, areas were painted, the floor was refinished, and the ten crosses on the exterior were regilded with gold leaf. The work was completed by August 1953. In 1956, the church attic was insulated with “full thick fiberglass bats from plate up to dome” and four inches of blown mineral wool above that elevation. In addition, insulation was placed “under floor of entry to steeple,” a window was closed off, and a new trap door to the tower was installed.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Royal Bouschor to Nikonar Kalik, letter, January 9, 1957; Papageorge Jewelry Company to Nikanor Kalik, letter, March 27, 1957; Steve Colich to Papageorge Jewelry Company, letter, April 9, 1957; Papageorge Jewelry Company to Steve Colich, letter, April 22, 1957; all at SGC.

<sup>62</sup> Giliuson and Ellingsen, plans for residence for St. George Serbian Orthodox Church, August 26, 1949, at SGC; “Church Architecture,” in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; agreement between Peter Glusac and St. George’s, October 4, 1949, at SGC; statement regarding subcontract, Peter Glusac to Eli Kovich, January 10, 1950, at SGC; Giliuson and Ellingsen, certificate for contractor payment, signed by W. E. Ellingsen, March 24, 1950, at SGC; W. E. Ellingsen to Paul Igich, letter, n.d., at SGC; W. E. Ellingsen to Eli Kovich, letter, April 21, 1950, at SGC.

<sup>63</sup> “Church Architecture,” in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; W. E. Ellingsen to Eli Kovich, letter, April 21, 1950, at SGC; Giliuson and Ellingsen, certificate for contractor payment, signed by W. E. Ellingsen, March 24, 1950, at SGC; “Serbian Orthodox Church Leaders to Attend Rites,” *Duluth Herald*, August 24, 1950.

<sup>64</sup> “St. George to Observe Thirtieth Year,” *Duluth Herald*, August 29, 1953; contract with Anderson Duluth Construction

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With the church's fortieth anniversary on the horizon, the congregation flagged "the old deteriorated windows and ventilators" for replacement. In July 1960, St. Germain Bros. made a proposal to "furnish and set . . . protection glass in fifteen Art glass units on church." A subsequent proposal added vents to the scope. A drawing from Nickila Glass Service later that month depicted a pair of windows and indicated that the lower section of one window would have a "ventilator screen and glass" and the other would have "glass only." The installation was completed two years later. A book issued for the 1963 celebration noted that "our church interior has been completely redecorated" and three new stained-glass windows were installed: "St. Sava and St. Petka, donated by our Serbian Sisters' Circle 1960-1961; [and] The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, donated by Mr. Gerasem Giurgiu, [a] member of our congregation." Giurgiu had been the janitor in the church's early years and had donated his salary towards the eventual installation of a stained-glass window.<sup>65</sup>

*Celebrating Fifty Years: Fellowship Hall*

As it approached its fiftieth anniversary, the congregation considered a more ambitious project, a new hall for fellowship and education, activities that had outgrown the church's small basement. "Training of our young people has been very important in the minds of Serbian people," a contemporary publication by the church asserted. "We speak here not only of the religious training, but the secular and cultural training as well." Men from the congregation taught children how to read and write in Serbian, and "it is the Serbian Church, not the Balkan people as a whole, that has kept the arts of 'tambura' playing and kolo dancing alive."<sup>66</sup>

In the 1960s, the congregation had identified several reasons for wanting additional space: "1) The need for promoting those activities which would attract our young people, bring them together and keep them closer to their church; 2) the desire to strengthen the social life among our adults and their families; 3) the elimination of all functions other than Sunday School from the present church hall." By 1965, they had acquired all of the lots fronting on the west side of 106<sup>th</sup> Street between Gary and McGonagle Streets, two blocks from the church, for a new "social center." Three years later, there were preliminary plans for a structure that Northern States Steel Builders proposed to erect for \$70,000 (Figure 7). The building measured 74 feet by 102 feet overall. The primary space was a 50-foot by 102-foot social hall with an acoustic-tile ceiling, prefinished panel walls, and vinyl-tile floor. Concrete-block partitions formed rooms for a kitchen, mechanical equipment, men and women's toilet rooms, and meeting space. The building's front facade would be faced with brick and have a 5-foot canopy extending across its entire width. Ribbed steel panels would sheath the other walls and the very low-pitched gable roof.<sup>67</sup>

The project remained on hold, though, through "years of debating the ability and the willingness of our people to commit themselves to a heavy financial burden," according to a church publication. "The decision was also delayed and complicated by the selection of a site." Locating the hall two blocks from the church was not ideal, but the parish home stood only thirty feet south of the church and a public alley was to the north, limiting options. The congregation finally gained consensus on a solution that involved relocating the home. The church would buy

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Company for insulation, August 7, 1956, at SGC.

<sup>65</sup> Drawing stamped Keystone Distributors, Duluth, in envelope from Nickila Glass Service, postmarked July 26, 1960, at SGC; SGSOC, *Fortieth Anniversary*, 1; Emily Johns, "Windows for St. George," *Duluth News Tribune*, July 13, 2002.

<sup>66</sup> SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 10; "Parish Activities," in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>67</sup> "Serbian Church Hall," brochure prepared by St. George Building Committee, [1968], at SGC.

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a lot directly south of the parish home, move the residence to that lot, add two bedrooms to accommodate the priest's growing family, and use the home's former site for the new hall, which could be connected to the church's basement by a tunnel.<sup>68</sup>

Duluth architect C. Alexander drew up a preliminary floor plan and front elevation for the hall in February 1970 (Figure 8). The structure would have a 50-foot by 75-foot footprint and be mostly on one level, but additional space for an entry hall and offices on the upper floor would bring the total volume to 4,000 square feet. In a letter proposing to complete working drawings and assist with issues during construction, Alexander estimated a cost of \$60,000 to \$65,000; a later estimate jumped to \$84,000. Alexander's design had toilet rooms in the southeast corner and a kitchen in the northeast corner, with a removable stage in a niche in the west wall.<sup>69</sup>

In November 1970, Alexander made a proposal to Dan Bastie, chair of the building committee, to prepare working drawings and specifications for a fee of \$2,700. Around the same time, Bastie met with architect John Ivey Thomas, who gave him a lump-sum bid of \$4,000 for the working drawings. Thomas was a well-established architect in Duluth, where he was born in 1931. He left to attend the University of Illinois and received a degree in architecture in 1955. Among the projects in his portfolio were the Beltrami Nursing Home in Bemidji (1969), the Thistledeu Youth Camp in Togo (1969), and the Northwood School in Duluth (1968). Thomas worked on his own and in affiliation with another architect, Thomas A. Vecchi. Thomas was also a partner in Design Engineering Associates with engineer George Nesgodda, who would design the mechanical system for the church's hall. All had offices at 1518 East Superior Street.<sup>70</sup>

It is not clear why the church switched architects but it did, hiring Thomas as the architect for the addition in July 1971 with the fee negotiated down to \$3,500. Bastie applied to the City of Duluth for a building permit for a "church school" on August 18, 1971. A day later, the city denied the application because the design failed to conform to zoning setback requirements. In a letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals, Bastie explained that the church had received a variance in May allowing a 15-foot setback in front of the addition and parish home rather than the required 25 feet, "but, much to our consternation, as well as that of the architects, the 15-foot setback does not allow us to so construct the building as to derive the maximum floor space for the center." Hence, the church requested an additional 5-foot allowance, bringing the setback to 10 feet.<sup>71</sup>

Final plans for the hall were dated October 25, 1971. On the same day, the church signed a construction contract with Duluth-based general contractor Ray Risberg, Inc. The cornerstone was laid in November with completion anticipated by May 1, 1972. Risberg's initial bid of \$59,600 covered only construction of the hall. Later, mechanical and utility work was added to the scope for another \$8,200. During the course of the project, Risberg and church representatives had a number of disagreements about what was covered by Risberg's contract, and

<sup>68</sup> Insert in program for "Cornerstone Consecration Rites of the St. George American-Serb Hall," November 28, 1971, at SGC; SGSOC, *Fortieth Anniversary*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> C. Alexander to Daniel Bastie, February 14, 1970, and undated plans; both at SGC. C. Alexander's office was at 6303 East Superior Street.

<sup>70</sup> C. Alexander to Dan Bastie, letter, November 6, 1970, at SGC; John Ivey Thomas to Dan Bastie, letter, November 4, 1970, at SGC; entry for John Ivey Thomas in *American Architects Directory, 1970* (n.p.: R. R. Bowker, 1970), 912; George Nesgodda to Dan Bastie, letter, May 9, 1972, at SGC; John Ivey Thomas, memorandum, April 24, 1972, at SGC.

<sup>71</sup> City of Duluth Department of Building Inspection to Daniel Bastie, denial of permit application, August 18, 1971; Daniel Bastie to City of Duluth Zoning Board of Appeals, n.d.; both at SGC.

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several change orders resulted. Ultimately, Risberg received a total of just under \$68,000 for the hall. The company also moved the parsonage to its new location for a fee of about \$13,000 (Figure 9).<sup>72</sup>

The addition was dedicated in July 1972. All in all, the project cost \$115,000. To cover part of the cost, the church obtained a mortgage from Park State Bank for \$42,500 in August 1972, using some of its property as collateral. The congregation had learned from its previous foreclosure experience and, after an energetic four-year fundraising effort, it burned the mortgage in June 1975.<sup>73</sup>

While the hall project was underway, the church basement was also undergoing a transformation. A proposal submitted by general contractor Walter Wipson in April 1970 included removing the existing hardwood floor system, pouring a concrete floor and covering it with vinyl tile, and sheathing the walls and ceiling with gypsum board.<sup>74</sup>

Furnishings and décor continued to be added to the church over time, sometimes paid for by money earned by the Serbian Sisters' Circle ("Kolo"), established in 1928. For example, they equipped the kitchen of the hall: "The new stoves, ovens, dishwasher, and utensils are the result of many hours of fund-raising by the sisters." Other items were purchased with funds donated by individuals and families, often to memorialize family members or priests who had served at St. George's. A new altar installed in 1992 honored a former priest who found the original, utilitarian altar inadequate. After he passed away, church members set up a memorial fund to commission the new piece from local woodcarvers Pete Macartney and Tom Branlund of Thomas and Company.<sup>75</sup>

Stained glass gradually replaced the plain glass in many of the windows, following a program developed at the time the church was built. Eight new stained-glass windows were installed in 2002, bringing the total number to twenty-two. The windows were crafted by a Missouri firm, the Bryan W. Lewis Studio. Four were behind the iconostasis, two in the apse and two in the side walls. Each depicted one of the evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The other four were at the west end of the church and featured "a father of the religion, St. John Chrysostom," St. George, the prophet Isaiah, and "another version of St. Mark." Two of the latter windows were 33 inches wide by 137 inches tall; the others measured 32 by 88 inches. The project's \$30,200 cost was donated by congregants.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Agreement between Serbian Orthodox Church and John Ivey Thomas, Standard American Institute of Architects Form, July 28, 1971, at SGC; Agreement between St. George Serbian Orthodox Church and Ray Risberg, Inc., Standard American Institute of Architects Form, October 25, 1971, at SGC; John Ivey Thomas and Design Engineering Associates, plan set for addition, October 25, 1971, at SGC; insert in program for "Cornerstone Consecration Rites of the St. George American-Serb Hall," November 28, 1971; "Consecration Set for Serbian Hall," *Duluth News Tribune*, November 27, 1971; Ray Risberg to Dan Bastie, letter, n.d., at SGC; Ray Risberg to John Ivey Thomas, "St. George Serbian Orthodox Church Hall Project," July 27, 1972, at SGC.

<sup>73</sup> Insert in program for "Cornerstone Consecration Rites of the St. George American-Serb Hall," November 28, 1971; photograph of "Hierarch and Clergy," *Duluth News Tribune*, June 22, 1975; Milan S. Balach to Park State Bank and St. George Serbian Orthodox Church, letter, September 24, 1973, at SGC; "St. George's Today," in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.

<sup>74</sup> Walter Wipson to Dan Bastie, letter, April 30, 1970, at SGC.

<sup>75</sup> "Parish Activities," in SGSOC, *Golden Anniversary*, n.p.; J. P. Furst, "New Altar Built on Age-old Faith," *Duluth News Tribune*, August 15, 1992.

<sup>76</sup> Johns, "Windows for St. George."

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By the twenty-first century, the congregation and the community surrounding the church had evolved. The area took a major hit when U.S. Steel began shutting down its plant in 1971, finally ending production at the coke works in 1979. The industrial complex was demolished but the land could not be redeveloped until pollution at the Superfund site was mitigated, a decades-long process. Even before that time, St. George's membership experienced attrition after reaching a peak of some 200 families in the 1930s. While continuing to attract new members, there was more loss than gain. The local Serbian community became diluted as members of the congregation moved away, children left town in pursuit of education and jobs, and new residents moved to the area. By the end of the century, St. George's congregation had dropped to around 130 families.<sup>77</sup>

Other Serbian communities were experiencing the same trends, though, which had a positive effect for St. George's. As congregations folded, St. George became the keeper of tradition for a broader region extending from Wakefield, Michigan, to the east to Crosby, Minnesota, to the west. "Some of [the] younger families look to St. George Church to help preserve their cultural heritage," a newspaper reported in 1998, and "some of the organizations that have served that purpose over the years are still active" including the choir, "Serbian Sisters Circle, St. George Men's Club, and a fraternal order called the Serb National Federation."<sup>78</sup>

*Criterion C: Architecture*

Studies of Serbian church architecture note a rich variety of influences from Asia, Greece, and Rome. More than is often the case with other religions, the church building is a physical manifestation of the faith and plays an important role in worship services. St. George's church takes motifs from precedents set by Serbian cathedrals and churches, such as arched brickwork patterns, corner towers, domed forms, and gilded Byzantine crosses, and articulates them in a more modest design scaled to the local level. The Duluth church stands out from others in its cohort by the quality of the iconostasis. The icon paintings are a masterpiece, the final major work by David Ericson. Another substantial collection of Ericson's art is at the Tweed Art Museum at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. A Minneapolis art dealer, Gallery 5004, notes that "Ericson's work is represented at the Duluth Art Association, MN, the La Crosse Art Association, WI, the Commercial Club in Duluth, the Swedish American Institute in Minneapolis, and in numerous other important private collections." In addition to Ericson's contribution, the iconostasis and other features display the fine craftsmanship of local woodworkers and painters.<sup>79</sup>

Both the screen and church are well preserved. The addition of the hall to the 1924 church completed in 1972 was done sensitively, with an inobtrusive semi-subterranean link and a low-to-the-ground main volume. Modifications to the church interior complement the original design and some, like the iconostasis and stained-glass windows, were planned from the outset and implemented as funding allowed.

<sup>77</sup> Maxim, "Aspects of Steel Plant History"; Linda Hanson, "St. George Marks Seventy-Five Years," *Duluth News Tribune*, October 9, 1998; Chris Havens, "Traditional Gathering," *Duluth News Tribune*, November 17, 2002.

<sup>78</sup> Hanson, "St. George Marks Seventy-Five Years"; Havens, "Traditional Gathering"; SGSOC, *Bicentennial Vidov-Dan-Celebration*, 7.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Graham Jackson, "The Serbian Churches," in *Serbian Orthodox Church*, ed. Michael Pupin (London: John Murray, 1918), 14-23; "David Ericson," Gallery 5004, accessed November 8, 2022, <https://www.gallery5004.com/david-ericson>.

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Based on these considerations, the property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of significance of Architecture. The period of significance begins and ends in 1924.

*Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage/European*

The inextricable relationship between St. George Serbian Orthodox Church and the ethnic heritage of its founders is explicit in its name. This relationship has been reinforced throughout the church's history by traditional worship services every Sunday, still partially conducted in the Serbian language with the choir's acapella accompaniment. The congregation continues to support organizations formed in the early decades of the twentieth century, the most prominent of which is the Serbian Sister's Circle. Members periodically gather in the hall's kitchen to make povititsa (walnut rolled pastry), sarma (cabbage rolls), pasties, sausages, and other Serbian dishes, using the proceeds from sale of these homemade treats to repair church buildings and acquire items used in worship services (Figure 10).

An article in the *Duluth New Tribune* in 1992 described the circle's activities: "They're old hands at this, making thousands of cabbage rolls every year for holidays, weddings, bazaars and other church events. It's an art and a talent learned from their mothers, many of whom came to Duluth from Eastern Europe a generation ago." The article noted that "the cabbage rolls are legendary in Gary-New Duluth, a neighborhood that has kept its ethnic character intact more than perhaps any other in the city." At a bazaar in 2002 where Serbian strudel, ustipci (doughnuts), sarma, and other treats were eagerly purchased by church members and nonmembers alike, one of the Sisters explained why she participated: "I'm doing it for the church and for carrying on the tradition." The article gave the example of "a grandmother [showing] her daughter and granddaughter how to make a certain food. The hope is that the granddaughter passes her knowledge on." As the priest observed, "It's like a wheel that's rolling."<sup>80</sup>

St. George's has survived as other Serbian Orthodox congregations in the region have consolidated or disappeared. Only one congregation remains active on the Iron Range after Saint Archangel Michael Serbian Orthodox Church in Hibbing merged with St. Basil of Ostrog Serbian Orthodox Church in Chisholm. The Hibbing church building was closed. The combined congregation holds services in English, "with some hymns done in Serbian in remembrance of the founders of our parish," at St. Basil's facility in Chisholm, which replaced an earlier church building in 1968.<sup>81</sup>

Duluth has another Orthodox church, Twelve Holy Apostles, affiliated with the Greek Orthodox tradition, but its ties to its heritage are not as pervasive as they are at St. George's. The congregation was founded on Duluth's east side in 1918 and moved into a building at 632 East Second Street, originally erected as a synagogue for Temple Emanuel, in 1923. At the time, the neighborhood had a high concentration of Greek residents. The congregation demolished the former temple and opened a new church on the same site in 1958. As at St. George's, an ornate screen separates the nave from the altar. The Twelve Holy Apostles screen, though, is seven panels wide in comparison to the nine-panel screen at St. George's and has only a partial second tier. By the 1960s, sermons at the Twelve Holy Apostles were given in English but services were still conducted primarily in Greek. Today, its

<sup>80</sup> J. P. Furst, "Ready to Roll: Homemade Cabbage Rolls Exemplify Serbian Traditions," *Duluth News Tribune*, July 31, 1992; Havens, "Traditional Gathering."

<sup>81</sup> "About Our Parish," St. Basil of Ostrog Serbian Orthodox Christian Church website, accessed November 8, 2022, <https://www.stbasilofostrog.org/aboutourparish>.

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website explains that “worship services are in English with small components repeated in Greek to honor our founders’ heritage.” An article in 1966 noted that the church “has a choir and an organ—both western adaptations, for the Greek church traditionally uses chanters rather than choirs and frowns on instrumental music in religious services.” These changes were in response to diversification in the parish, which by the twenty-first century comprised “people from 25 ethnic backgrounds.” Like St. George’s, the church uses food as a link to its Greek beginnings, sponsoring a “Taste of Greece” festival in the summer. The event is held at a local school, though, not at the church.<sup>82</sup>

Because of the long and deep relationship St. George’s has maintained with its Serbian origins, reflecting traditions brought to this country by Serbian immigrants more than a century ago, the property merits National Register designation under Criterion A for its significance in the area of European ethnic heritage. The period of significance begins with the church’s completion in 1924. The church remains a center of Serbian immigrant culture today. National Register guidance states that “fifty years ago is used as the closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continued to have importance and no more specific date can be defined to end the historic period.”<sup>83</sup> Based on this direction, the period of significance for St. George’s ends in 1973.

*Criteria Consideration A*

The separation of church and state is a fundamental doctrine in the United States, so properties are categorically prohibited from being listed in the National Register if they are only significant for their religious associations. Under National Register Criteria Consideration A, though, a religious property may be considered for designation if it is primarily significant for its “architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.” St. George’s is significant architecturally for exemplifying Serbian Orthodox church design and is of artistic distinction for its iconostasis, which features the work of master artist David Ericson and other fine craftsmen. In addition, the property is historically important for its association with the ethnic heritage of Serbian immigrants and their role in Duluth’s history in the twentieth century. As such, St. George Serbian Orthodox Church meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration A.

<sup>82</sup> John Lundy, “Traditional Appeal,” *Duluth News Tribune*, March 11, 2018; Chris Hamilton, “Choosing the Big Lake over the Big City,” *Duluth News Tribune*, April 22, 2000; “The Byzantine Type of Church Architecture,” *Duluth Herald*, November 1, 1958; “Greek Bishop to Consecrate Duluth Church,” *Duluth Herald*, June 30, 1966; Walter Eldot, “Primate Will Visit Greek Church Here for Colorful Rites,” *Duluth News Tribune*, July 3, 1966; “About Us” and “Taste of Greece,” Twelve Holy Apostles Orthodox Church website, accessed November 8, 2022, <https://www.12holyapostles.org/>.

<sup>83</sup> *National Registers Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, 1986), 42.



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St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

Name of Property

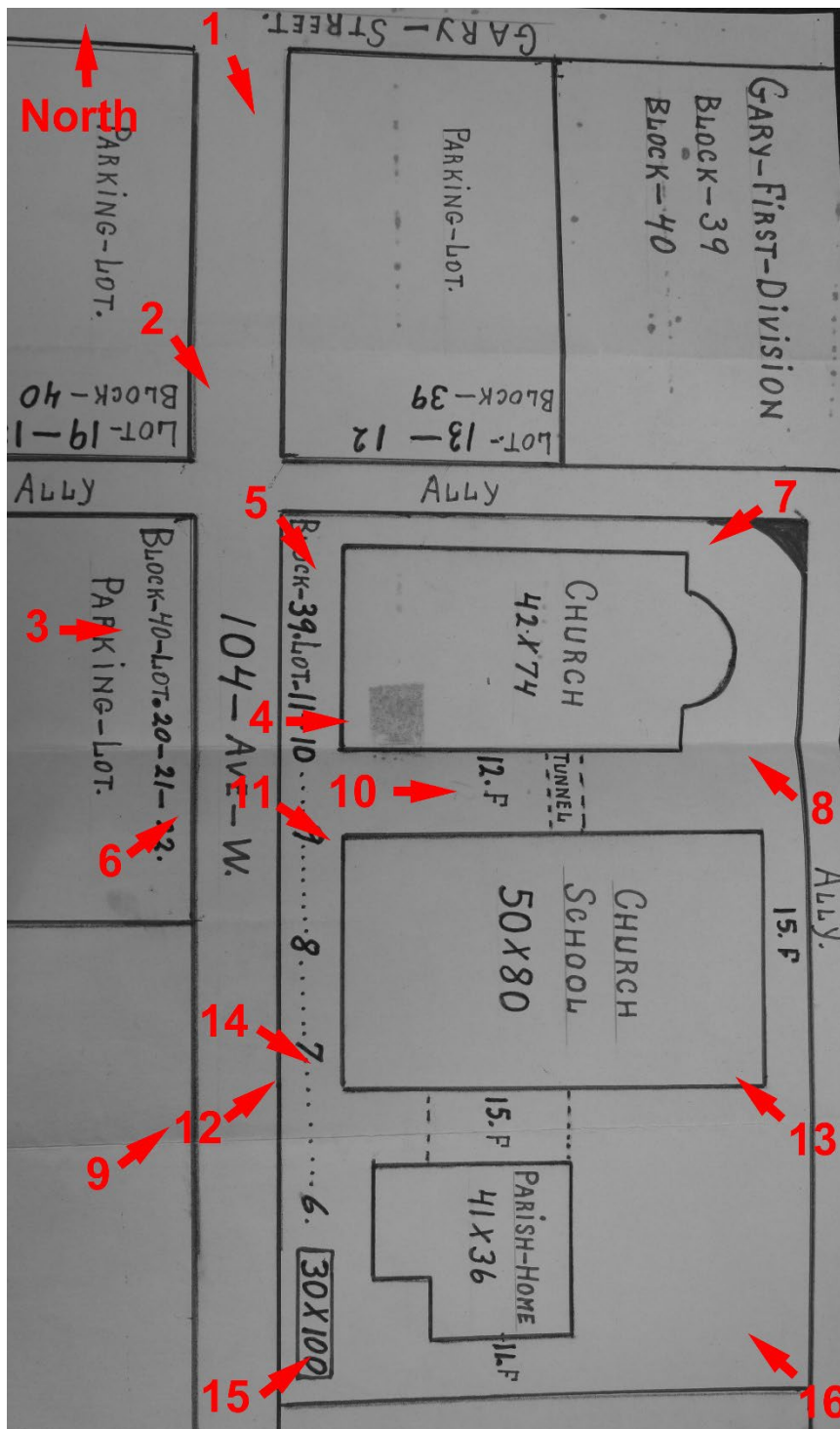
St. Louis County, Minnesota

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

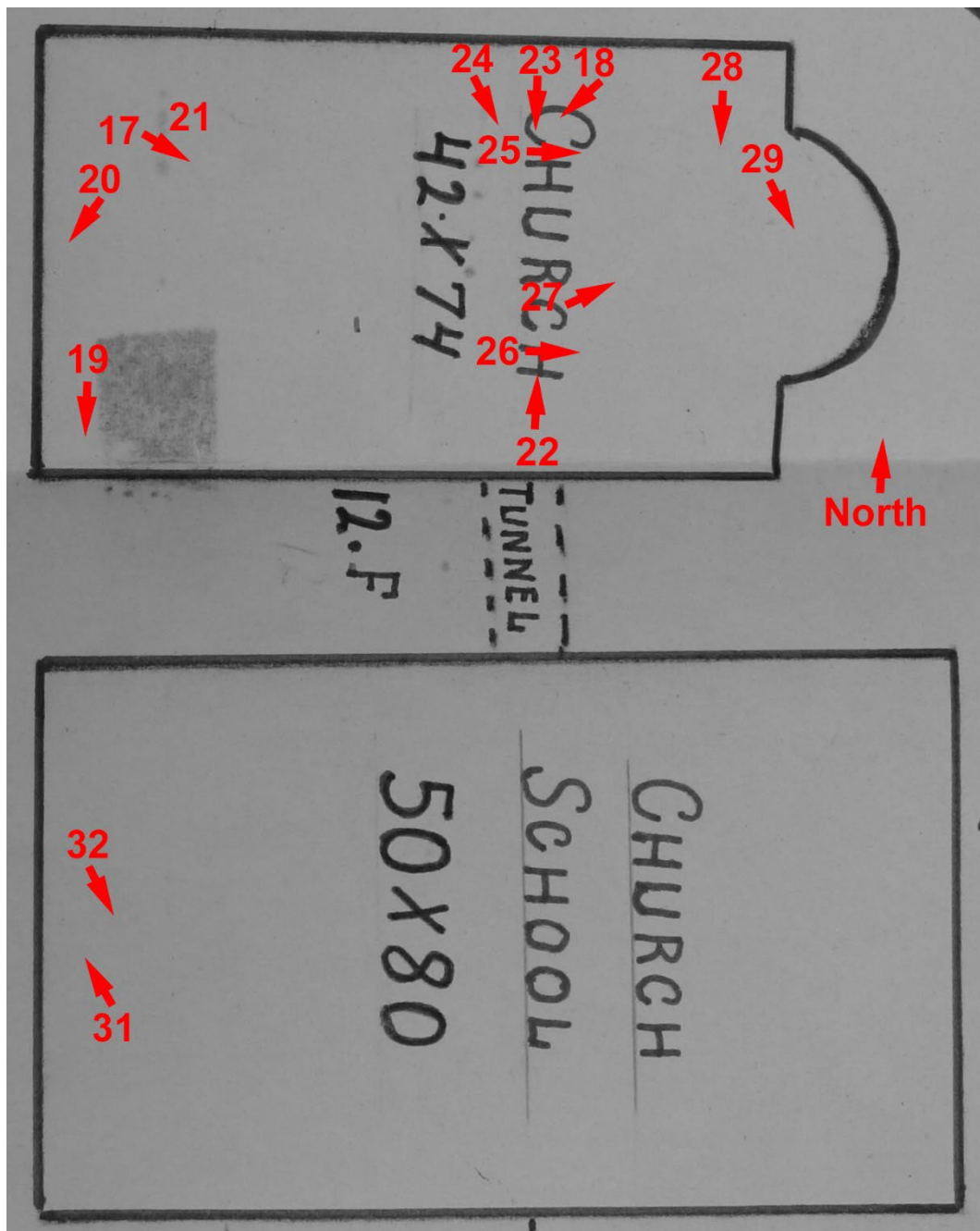
Name of Property

St. Louis County, Minnesota

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Photo Key-  
Interior-Level 1  
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St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

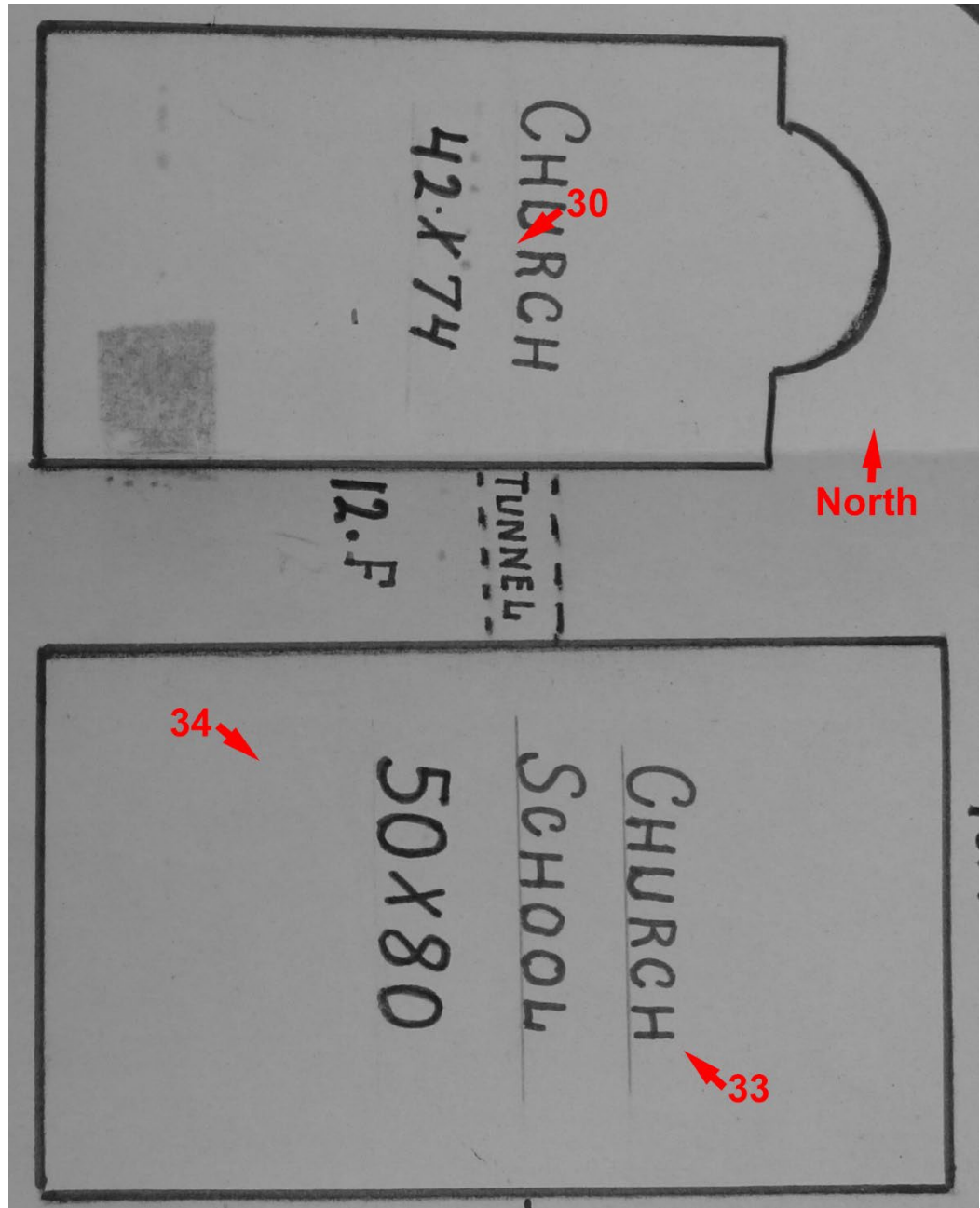
Name of Property

St. Louis County, Minnesota

County and State

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Photo Key-Interior-  
Lower Level  
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St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

Name of Property

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**Photo 1 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 17, 2023

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0001

The property's setting, looking southeast on 104<sup>th</sup> Avenue West from Gary Street towards church.

**Photo 2 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 17, 2023

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0002

Church, fellowship hall, and parish home, looking southeast.

**Photo 3 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 17, 2023

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0003

Front (west) facade of church, looking east.

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St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

Name of Property

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**Photo 4 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** August 1, 2021

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0004

Detail of 1923 cornerstone with Serbian inscription on south corner of front facade, looking east.

**Photo 5 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** August 1, 2021

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0005

Detail of granite sign and 1923 cornerstone with English inscription on north corner of front facade, looking southeast.

**Photo 6 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 17, 2023

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0006

Front and south facades of church, looking northeast. Note link between church and fellowship hall extending from east end of south facade of church.

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**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** August 1, 2021

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0007

North facade and curved apse on east facade of church, looking southwest.

**Photo 8 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** March 9, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0008

South facade and curved apse on east facade of church, looking northwest. Note link between church and fellowship hall in lower left corner.

**Photo 9 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** August 1, 2021

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0009

Front and south facades of church and fellowship hall, looking northeast.

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St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

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**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** August 1, 2021

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0010  
Detail of link between church and fellowship hall, looking east.

**Photo 11 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 17, 2023

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0011  
Front and north facades of fellowship hall with plaza in foreground, looking southeast. Parish home is visible in background right.

**Photo 12 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
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**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
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MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0012  
Front and south facades of fellowship hall, looking northeast.

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**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
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**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** August 1, 2021

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0013  
South (left) and rear (east) facades of fellowship hall, looking northwest.

**Photo 14 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 17, 2023

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0014  
North and east (front) facades of parish home, looking southeast.

**Photo 15 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 17, 2023

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0015  
Front and south facades of parish home, looking northeast.

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**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
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**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** August 1, 2021

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0016  
Rear (east) facade of parish home, looking northwest.

**Photo 17 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0017  
Interior of nave, looking southeast towards iconostasis from balcony.

**Photo 18 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
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**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0018  
Interior of nave, looking southwest towards balcony and narthex.

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**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

**City or Vicinity:** Duluth

**County:** St. Louis County

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**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise

**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0019

Stairs in narthex leading up to balcony and down to lower level, looking southwest.

**Photo 20 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

**City or Vicinity:** Duluth

**County:** St. Louis County

**State:** Minnesota

**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise

**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0020

Balcony with ladder to bell tower, looking southwest.

**Photo 21 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

**City or Vicinity:** Duluth

**County:** St. Louis County

**State:** Minnesota

**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise

**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0021

Room below balcony in northwest corner of nave, looking northwest.

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**Photo 22 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
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**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0022  
North wall of nave, looking north.

**Photo 23 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
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**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:**

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0023  
South wall of nave, looking south.

**Photo 24 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
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**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
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MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0024  
Iconostasis, looking southeast.



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**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
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MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0025  
Detail of north section of iconostasis, looking east.

**Photo 26 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
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**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0026  
Detail of south section of iconostasis, looking east.

**Photo 27 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0027  
Detail of center of iconostasis, looking northeast into sanctuary.

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**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

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**State:** Minnesota

**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise

**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0028  
Sanctuary, looking south.

**Photo 29 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

**City or Vicinity:** Duluth

**County:** St. Louis County

**State:** Minnesota

**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise

**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0028  
Curved ceiling of apse in sanctuary, looking southeast.

**Photo 30 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

**City or Vicinity:** Duluth

**County:** St. Louis County

**State:** Minnesota

**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise

**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0030  
Main room in lower level of church, looking southwest.

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Name of Property

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**Photo 31 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0031

Entry lobby in fellowship hall, looking northwest. Stairs descend from lobby to main meeting room.

**Photo 32 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0032

Entry lobby in fellowship hall, looking southeast. Stairs descend from lobby to main meeting room.

**Photo 33 of 34**

**Name of Property:** St. George Serbian Orthodox Church  
**City or Vicinity:** Duluth  
**County:** St. Louis County  
**State:** Minnesota  
**Name of Photographer:** Charlene Roise  
**Date of Photograph:** July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0033

Main meeting room of fellowship hall, looking northwest. One of the double doors for the link to the church is center-right.

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St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

Name of Property

St. Louis County, Minnesota

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**Photo 34 of 34**

**Name of Property:**

**St. George Serbian Orthodox Church**

**City or Vicinity:**

**Duluth**

**County:**

**St. Louis County**

**State:**

**Minnesota**

Name of Photographer:

Charlene Roise

Date of Photograph:

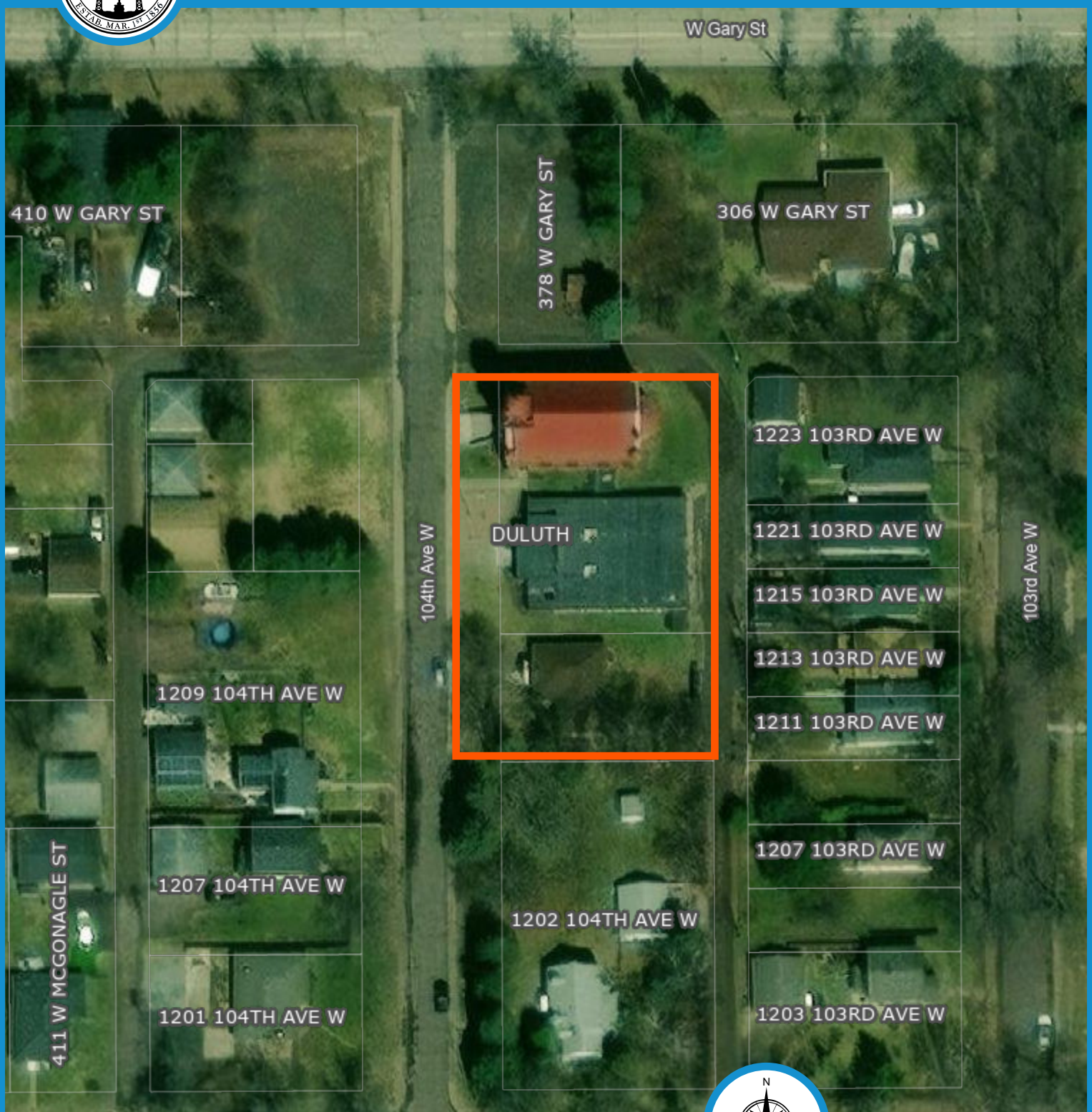
July 11, 2022

MN\_StLouisCounty\_StGeorgeSerbianOrthodoxChurch\_0034  
Main meeting room of fellowship hall, looking southeast.

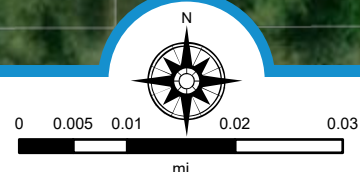


# County Land Explorer

St. Louis County, Minnesota



NRHP-St George-Boundary map



County Land Explorer

St. Louis County

[www.stlouiscountymn.gov/explorer](http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/explorer)

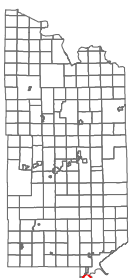
Minnesota

#### Disclaimer

This is a compilation of records as they appear in the Saint Louis County Offices affecting the area shown. This drawing is to be used only for reference purposes and the County is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein

Map created using County Land Explorer  
[www.stlouiscountymn.gov/explorer](http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/explorer)

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St. George Serbian Orthodox Church

Name of Property

St. Louis County, Minnesota

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

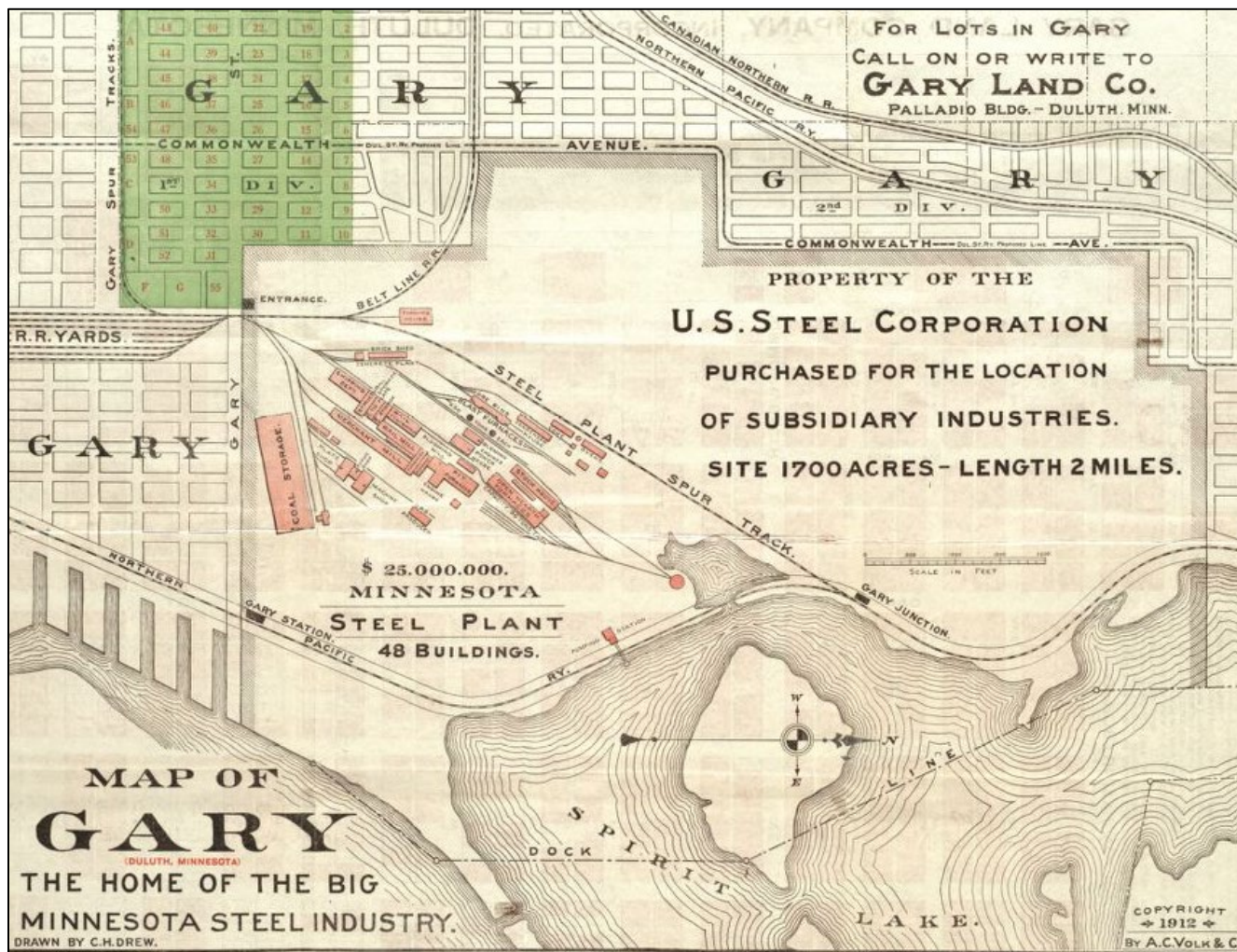


Figure 1: Map of Gary and the proposed U.S. Steel plant, 1912.

(C. H. Drew, artist; published by A. C. Volk and Company for Gary Land Company, 1912; Northeast Minnesota Historical Collections, UMD)

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Figure 2: Undated (circa 1930s?) colorized photograph of church. (SGA)



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Figure 3: Only the cars reveal that this photograph was taken in 1957. The church's appearance was virtually the same as when it was completed in 1924. (Northeast Minnesota Historical Collections, UMD)



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Figure 4: Blueprint for the iconostasis. (SGC)

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Jan 1st 1946

Dear Paul Joseph:

Please find inclosed, receipted Bill

To St. Georges Serbian Orthodox Church

for 24 panels-oil paintings of Saints \$1500.<sup>00</sup>

to David Ericson artist, for these paintings \$1500.<sup>00</sup>

Paid in full

David Ericson.

many thanks

Figure 5: Ericson's acknowledgement of payment. (SGC)

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Figure 6: This photograph apparently dates from the 1950s when the parish home was in its original location. (SGC)

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Figure 7: Initial plans called for a free-standing social hall two blocks from the church. (SGC)



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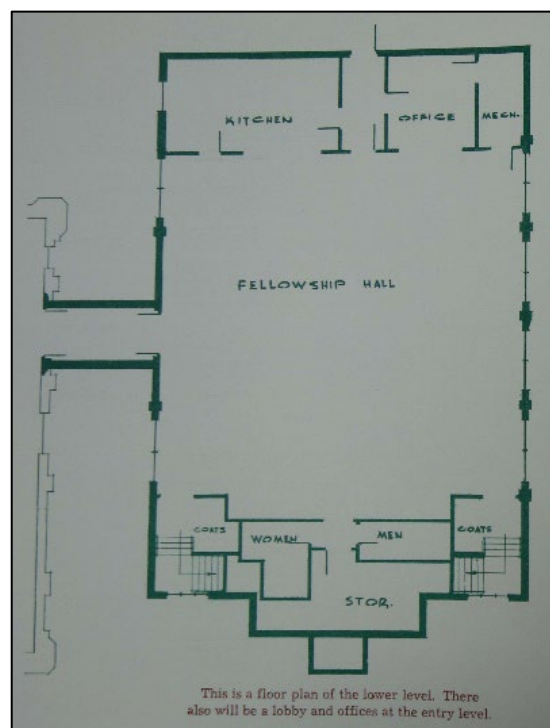


Figure 8: Rendering and floor plan from program for consecration of hall cornerstone. (SGC)

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Figure 9: The new hall and relocated parish house, 1972. (SGC)

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Figure 10: Undated and unattributed photographs of St. George's Serbian Sister's Circle at work. (SGC)