

St. Seraphim Russian Orthodox  
Churches, New Church  
Lower Kalskag  
Alaska < Bethel

HABS No. AK-92-B

HABS  
AK,  
3-LOCAL,  
1B-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. SERAPHIM RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, NEW CHURCH

HABS No. AK-92 B

HABS  
AK  
3-LOKAL,  
1B-

Location: Lower Kalskag, Alaska.

Present Owner: Alaska Diocese, Orthodox Church in America.

Present Occupant: St. Seraphim Russian Orthodox Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: Although one of the newer Russian Orthodox churches in Alaska, St. Seraphim is in a time-honored form, with a hip-roofed square nave framed by a gable-roofed sanctuary and narthex.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1972-1975. Consecrated December 4, 1975.
2. Architect, builder: The church was designed by Iftukim Evan, a member of the church. Evan was not trained as a carpenter, but as the operator of the sawmill, he was the most qualified person in the village. He has a third-grade education. Evan was assisted in the construction by various villagers, who donated their time as inclination dictated. (Evan interview)
3. Original plans and construction: Iftukim Evan designed the church by looking at photographs of other Russian Orthodox churches, and then got approval from the priest. He did not make drawings, but designed it in his head. He said it took a long time to design the hipped roof, as he had never built one before.

Evan also designed some of the decorative elements of the interior. The semi-circular projection of the amvon gave him particular problems. He used a compass and a jigsaw to create the balustrades of the krilos. The chandelier was donated, and Evan figured out how to electrify it. (Evan interview)

4. Alterations and additions: The vestibule was added in 1976.

B. Previous Churches on the Site:

The previous church is still standing. See HABS No. AK-92 A.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The square hip-roofed nave is framed by a gable-roofed sanctuary and narthex.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The nave is nearly square, measuring 27'-10" x 28'-0". The sanctuary measures 20'-0" x 15'-11", and the narthex, 19'-9" x 16'-1".
2. Foundations: The wood post foundations are set at greater dimensions than the building above. The foundations are boxed in with plywood, painted gray.
3. Walls: The walls are covered with a grooved plywood known as T1-11 siding, painted white with royal blue trim.
4. Structural system: wood frame.
5. Porch: There is a shed-roofed porch with a plank floor and balustrade.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The front doorway has plain double doors. The entrance is slightly recessed in an arched surround.
  - b. Windows: The windows have one-over-one-light sash set in plain frames.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The nave has a hipped roof, covered with corrugated metal. The roofs of the vestibule and narthex are gable, also covered with corrugated metal. The eaves extend about 1' beyond the building.
  - b. Cupolas: There are cupolas, onion domes, and crosses over the nave, sanctuary, and belfry.
  - c. Belltower: A plywood belltower with a pyramidal roof rises out of the roof of the narthex.

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C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The nave is one open space, 27'-2" square. The sanctuary is to the east, separated from the nave by the iconostas. The narthex is on the west.
2. Stairways: There is a three-step amvon, with a projection in the center that is more oblong than semi-circular, and krilos on the sides.
3. Flooring: The floor of the nave is covered with linoleum. The narthex floor is plywood, and the sanctuary floor is plywood covered with carpet.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are covered with paneling, with a scalloped cornice. The tray ceiling is covered with plywood.
5. Doorways: There are plain double doors between the narthex and the nave.
6. Decorative features: The iconostas, which rises to the ceiling, has paneling and arched doorways.
7. Mechanical equipment: There is a crystal chandelier, fluorescent and incandescent lights, and a wood stove.

D. Site:

The church is set back about 1/2 mile from the river, on the other side of town. The church faces west, with the altar on the east, as is traditional among Russian Orthodox churches. The church is set in a grassy chruchyard, fenced with logs and wire.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Evan, Iftukim, who built the church, interviewed by author, May 24, 1990.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of St. Seraphim Russian Orthodox Church was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, the state of Alaska, and the Icon Preservation Task Force. The project was executed under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, and Boyd Evison, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service. Recording was carried out during summer 1990 by Steven M. Peterson, project director; Jet Lowe, photographer; and Alison K. Hoagland, historian, who prepared this report.