

OMP NO. 1004-0018  
EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 20 1982

date entered  
JUN 17 1982

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

1. Name

historic Moving Star Hall  
and/or common Moving Star Hall

2. Location

River Rd.

street & number River Road, about 6 miles south of Charleston N/A not for publication  
city, town Johns Island N/A vicinity of congressional district  
state South Carolina code 045 county Charleston code 019

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Moving Star Young Association  
street & number River Road  
city, town Johns Island N/A vicinity of state South Carolina 29455

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charleston County Courthouse, City Office Building  
street & number 2 Courthouse Square  
city, town Charleston state South Carolina 29401

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Inventory of Historic  
title Places in South Carolina has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1980  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records South Carolina Department of Archives and History  
city, town Columbia state South Carolina 29211

# 7. Description

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

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

Moving Star Hall is a praise house located on rural Johns Island, South Carolina. The small frame building, which was built ca. 1917 by its membership, functioned as the meeting place of the Moving Star Young Association, a religious, social, fraternal, and charitable community institution. Although several recent alterations have been made to the hall, the major features of the building have not been changed, and it retains the appearance of a simple wooden meeting room.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Exterior: The crudely built, one-story, rectangular, frame, weatherboarded building is set on low concrete block pillars and has a metal-covered gable roof. The facade (southeast elevation) has a hip-roofed porch, which originally had four wooden post supports and a plank floor. The posts have been replaced by two modern wrought iron uprights set at each forward corner. A concrete slab on concrete block foundation replaces the wooden porch floor and sills. The entrance has a modern six-panelled door. The front gable above the porch shows evidence of recent repair. Some of the weatherboards are new, and the original boxed cornice with return has been replaced with a plain boxed cornice which extends around the roofline.

The northeast elevation is four bays wide with two six-over-six, double-hung windows, which are recent replacements. Window openings have been altered to accommodate the smaller size. The two middle windows have been boarded up. The southwest elevation is identical except for the presence of a freestanding concrete block chimney added sometime after 1974. The rear (northwest elevation) is divided into two bays containing one window and a panelled door.

Interior: The one-room, undecorated interior contains simple backless benches facing a plain table at the west end. The plywood flooring is new.

Surroundings: Moving Star Hall is located in a rural black community. It is set back from River Road, a major artery to island resort areas to the south. One outbuilding, a privy, is to the rear, and a barbed wire fence encloses the entire property. Houses of similar construction, a concrete block store, and a launderette are visible from the hall.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** ca. 1917      **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Located on rural Johns Island, South Carolina, Moving Star Hall was built ca. 1917 by its membership.<sup>1</sup> The small frame building is significant as the only remaining praise house of the South Carolina Sea Islands that has been identified. It served as the meeting place of the Moving Star Young Association, significant for its role in preserving black music and religious and social/humanitarian traditions.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Largely supplanted by churches after emancipation, the praise house represented a survival of a purely plantation institution into the early twentieth century. The praise house functioned as a community meeting hall, place of religious worship, center for spreading news, and face-to-face gathering place to promote community solidarity.<sup>2</sup> The Moving Star Young Association was chartered in 1920 as a "social, fraternal, and charitable" organization.<sup>3</sup> Land and lumber for Moving Star Hall were purchased with membership contributions and the hall was built ca. 1917 by its membership. At that time Johns Island was geographically isolated from the mainland, accessible only by boat, and all necessities had to be provided by the community. The Moving Star Young Association was organized to serve those needs. Until the mid-seventies, Moving Star Hall housed a "tend-the-sick" and burial society, a secret fraternal order, and a community of worship.<sup>4</sup>

The scope of what Moving Star Hall provided grew with the changing times and the evolving status of the black. When, in 1948-49, it became clear to Johns Island black leaders that the vote was the key to a better life, the Progressive Club was established. The Progressive Club drew on Moving Star Hall for its members and used the hall for its early meetings. While the initial goal was to get blacks registered, the group eventually established a community-owned store, a recreation center which also served as a meeting place for race relations discussion groups, and a defense fund to pursue black justice in the then white-dominated courts.<sup>5</sup> The Progressive Club, as a concept, worked well because it had Moving Star Hall's precedent experience of cooperative effort to draw on.

Moving Star Hall is currently not used. Its future existence is threatened primarily by changes, most for the good, in the fabric of life on Johns Island. Fuller participation in politics and government and assistance to the poor have negated many of Moving Star Hall's former functions; in addition, the loss of its young people to the cities has decimated its membership.<sup>6</sup>

Also, Moving Star Hall is a victim of time and vigorous use. The hall was closed after floor joists became dangerously weak.<sup>7</sup> Recent repairs, however, indicate an intent to resume use of the building. The Moving Star Young Association's charter lapsed in 1977, and to date no reapplication has been made.<sup>8</sup>

CONTINUED

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Legareville

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	7	5	9	1	3	3	9	3	6	1	6	2	7	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The boundary of the Moving Star Hall nomination is shown as the red line on the accompanying Charleston County Tax Map No. 318-0-0, which is drawn at a scale of 400 feet to the inch. The nominated property includes the historic building and its immediate setting, while excluding nearby nonhistoric buildings.

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Starr

Mary Watson  
S.C. Dept. of Archives & History

organization

date February 14, 1982

street & number 121 West Springs Road

telephone 788-9374

city or town Columbia

state South Carolina 29204

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Charles E. Lee

Charles E. Lee May 4, 1982

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

### For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date

6/17/82

for Keeler of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet 1 Item number 8 Page 1

Religion: The Moving Star Hall society was an interdenominational group whose members were also members-in-good-standing with local black churches. They attended regular church services on Sunday. Meetings, beginning with prayer and ending with song, were held from one to three times a week at the hall. Each member had a turn at preaching or song leading, while others could testify. Moving Star Hall provided an alternative to the more formal liturgy of the churches as well as an opportunity to exercise leadership.<sup>9</sup>

Music: The membership of Moving Star Hall helped to preserve the music of the black population of the South Carolina Sea Islands. In the song and dance offered in praise houses, slaves had found temporary release from the harshness of their everyday lives. The spirituals and style of singing associated with them remained alive after the Civil War in praise houses like Moving Star Hall.<sup>10</sup> According to Mr. William Saunders of Johns Island, "We all as kids went to Moving Star Hall. As far as I was concerned, I just had to be there. We used to enjoy the singing and shouting ... That place used to be full three nights a week."<sup>11</sup>

In the 1960s Moving Star Hall was associated with rebirth of appreciation for the music of the sea islands. A group of Moving Star Hall singers appeared at national and local folk festivals in the 1960s and recorded three albums of their songs. The singers received favorable critical review.<sup>12</sup>

The spirituals and shouts of Moving Star Hall are performed unaccompanied and in a Gullah/English call and response style. The singing begins in a minor key with slow rhythms and diphthongs. About half-way through, the "shout" begins. Overall meter picks up and polyphonic rhythms of hand clapping and foot stomping are added. As many as three different rhythms may be carried at once by hands, feet, and voice. The music rises to a climactic, positive, and hopeful finish. Interestingly, the sad subject matter of the song rarely changes; only its perception is altered as indicated by the shift from spiritual to shout. Style, rhythm, verse sequence, and melody may differ from one leader to another, allowing the music to be reinvented with each performance.<sup>13</sup>

Social/Humanitarian: Before the Civil War free blacks often banded together to form mutual aid societies. For example, organizations for caring for the sick and burying the dead existed among free blacks in Baltimore, New York, and Petersburg, Virginia. These mutual benefit organizations, forerunners of the black insurance companies, experienced much growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as blacks struggled to become socially self-sufficient.<sup>14</sup> Members of the Moving Star Young Association participated in a "sick benefit" and a "death benefit" much like the pre-Civil War mutual benefit societies. This type of folk insurance went beyond simple monetary reimbursement for misfortune. Families of members who had contributed twenty-five cents to one dollar a month received from twenty-five to \$100 at that member's death. Members of the Moving Star Hall society then served as pallbearers, gravediggers, and mourners for its dead. The sick benefit included a "tend-the-sick" service. Two members cared for any sick member day and night until he was "better or worse." This duty was required of everyone, and those who failed in it were fined. Any member unable to pay his bills during illness could call on the society to do it for him.<sup>15</sup>

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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 9

Page 1

PUBLISHED MATERIALS

Books:

Carawan, Guy and Candie. Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966.

Franklin, John Hope. From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1947; Vintage Books, 1969.

Joyner, Charles W. Folk Song in South Carolina. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1971.

Rose, Willie Lee. Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964.

Woofter, Thomas Jackson. Black Yeomanry: Life on St. Helena Island. New York: H. Holt and Company, 1930.

Journals, Newspapers:

Browning, James B. "The Beginnings of Insurance Enterprise Among Negroes." Journal of Negro History 22 (October 1937): 417-432.

Twining, Mary Arnold. Review of Ain't You Got A Right to the Tree of Life, by Guy and Candie Carawan. Ethnomusicology, 11 (September, 1967): 421-422.

Wilgus, D. K. Review of Sea Island Festival (Folkways Records FS 3841). Journal of American Folklore 79 (January-March, 1966): 510-511; and Review of Been in the Storm So Long (Folkways Records FS 3842). Journal of American Folklore 81 (January-March, 1968): 89.

News and Courier (Charleston, S.C.), 19 January and 27 July 1964.

Records:

Guy Carawan. Been in the Storm So Long, Spirituals and shouts, folktales and children's game songs of John's Island, South Carolina. Recorded by Guy Carawan, Folkways Records FS3842.

UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

Columbia, S.C. South Carolina Department of Archives and History. South Carolina, Office of the Secretary of State. Eleemosynary Corporations, #1475.

Galbraith, Letitia. Drayton Hall Plantation, Charleston County, South Carolina. Interview, 30 July 1980.

Timms, Jane. South Carolina Secretary of State's Office, Columbia, South Carolina. Interview, 6 October 1980.

Moving Star Hall  
Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Introductory Material from Been in the Storm So Long, Spirituals and Shouts, folktales and children's game songs of John's Island, South Carolina, recorded by Guy Carawan, Folkways Records FS3842.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Jackson Woofter, Black Yeomanry: Life on St. Helena Island (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1930), pp. 236, 238.

<sup>3</sup>South Carolina, Office of the Secretary of State, Eleemosynary Corporations, Moving Star Young Association, Charter #1475, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>4</sup>Guy and Candie Carawan, Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), pp. 9, 92-93.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 172-177.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 177-180.

<sup>7</sup>Interview with Letitia Galbraith, Administrator, Drayton Hall Plantation, Charleston County, South Carolina, 30 July 1980.

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Jane Timms, South Carolina Secretary of State's Office, Columbia, South Carolina, 6 October 1980.

<sup>9</sup>Carawan, pp. 85, 92, 96; News and Courier (Charleston, S.C.), 27 July 1964.

<sup>10</sup>Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), pp. 90-91; Introductory Material from Been in the Storm So Long; Carawan, preface; Woofter, pp. 219-220.

<sup>11</sup>Carawan, p. 107.

<sup>12</sup>News and Courier, 19 January 1964 and 27 July 1964; D. K. Wilgus, review of Sea Island Festival (Folkways Records FS 3841), in Journal of American Folklore 79 (January-March 1966): 510-511; D. K. Wilgus, review of Been in the Storm So Long (Folkways Records FS 3842), in Journal of American Folklore 81 (January-March 1968): 89.

<sup>13</sup>Charles W. Joyner, Folk Song in South Carolina (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 71-73; Mary Arnold Twining, review of Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life, by Guy and Candie Carawan, in Ethnomusicology 11 (September, 1967): 421-422.

<sup>14</sup>John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1947; Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 226-227, 406-407; James B. Browning, "The Beginnings of Insurance Enterprise Among Negroes," Journal of Negro History 22 (October 1937): 417-432.

<sup>15</sup>Carawan, p. 93.