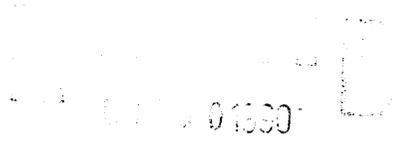


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "NA" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Middlefork Methodist Episcopal Church
other names/site number Middlefork United Methodist Church

2. Location/ R.R. 1 One mile south of State 169 one and a half miles west
street & number of County P38) not for publication
city, town Redding vicinity
state Iowa code IA county Ringgold code 159 zip code 50860

3. Classification

Ownership of Property		Category of Property		Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	1	1	buildings	
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site			sites	
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure			structures	
	<input type="checkbox"/> object			objects	
		1	1	Total	

Name of Related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet, section _____ page _____.

David L.
Signature of certifying official
Date 10/19/90

State Historical Society of Iowa
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet National Register criteria.
 See continuation sheet, section _____ page _____.

Signature of commenting or other official
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
See continuation sheet, section page
determined eligible for the National Register.
See continuation sheet, section page
determined not eligible for the National Register.

entered in the National Register

Signature of the Keeper: Allow Byers 11/29/9

- removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)
Religious Structure/Church

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)
Religious Structure/Church

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)
Italianate

Materials
(enter categories from instructions)
foundation Limestone
walls Wood
roof Asphalt
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheet, section 7 page 1

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)

Areas of Significance
(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance
1886

Significant Dates
1886

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
W. M. Staton, builder
J. H. Saville, builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. See continuation sheet, section 8 page 1

9. Major Bibliographical References

Mrs. Clarence Waugh, "Middle Fork Church: 1886-1986" (1986)

Nelson Mason, "The History of Middlefork Township"

Warranty Deed Record, B. J. Conine and wife to Trustees of M. E. Church, Middle Fork Township, December 9, 1886.

See continuation sheet, section _____ page _____

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 # _____

- Primary location of additional data:
- State historic preservation office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A | 1 | 5 | | 3 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 0 | | 4 | 4 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 0 |
Zone Easting Northing
C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Zone Easting Northing
D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

See continuation sheet, section _____ page _____

Verbal Boundary Description See continuation sheet, section 10 page 1

Boundary Justification See continuation sheet, section 10 page 1

11. Form Prepared By

author/title James E. Jacobsen
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date September 20, 1990
street & number Capitol Complex telephone 515-281-4358
city or town Des Moines state IA zip code 50319

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Middlefork Methodist Episcopal Church is a locally significant example of an Italianate style influenced rural community frame church. It is significant for its being representative of a once common class of rural religious buildings. It is further significant within its county as the sole surviving and absolutely unchanged example of its building type, one that once numbered forty in Ringgold County alone. One of three active rural churches in the county, Middlefork alone boasts an unaltered plan, and a number of distinctive structural and decorative features. The single story frame church, stands a scant one and a half miles north of the Missouri state line, in southwest Ringgold County.

Middlefork Church is located in the center of a rural township along the Missouri Border. It is sited prominently on a bluffline overlooking a "Y" intersection of county roads just to the west of the church. A long curving drive approaches the church from the south winding east of and along a wooded gully which angles in front of the church. A treeline borders the west side of the one acre churchyard, and is pierced by a farm lane that runs west into a low area beyond the trees. The edge of a quarter acre township cemetery, unrelated to the church, forms the east boundary. A gate provides access near the church. The cemetery has been enlarged twice in the last 25 years and remains in active use. Another farmlane leads north from the east rear of the church. The last hitching rack disappeared in 1939. New church roofs were put on in 1941 and 1971. The cemetery was fenced and last enlarged in 1971.

This single story white clapboard church is rectangular in plan (26 feet by 44 feet), and rests on a limestone foundation. The plain building is largely Italianate in its design influence, given the tall thin round hooded side windows and double-front door entryway. Other classical influences are represented in the corner boards with capitals, frieze board trim, rounded hood molds above each window and the double front entrance, and moldings which trim the eaveslines. A gothic-style transom distinguishes the entryway.

The facade is blank save for the double entrance. A concrete stoop replaces a frame porch. A centennial cornerstone was placed in the foundation in 1986. Each side wall is pierced by four evenly spaced double hung (4 over 4 sash) windows with rounded hoods. The rearmost window is closer to the rear wall due to the presence of a front hall in the plan. The rear wall is absolutely blank. The roof is covered with gray asphalt shingles of mixed hues. A brick chimney is centered on the overall plan.

One enters into a front hall that spans the width of the building. A trapdoor leads into the attic above, but there is otherwise only two symmetrically placed doorways with transoms which lead into the sanctuary. The sanctuary features original pews, 48" high chair rail and darkly varnished wainscoting (the window sills are cut down into the chair rail some 8 inches). The window surrounds are plainly trimmed. There are two aisles which lead to a nine foot deep altar area. The rostrum is faced with cardboard. The sanctuary measures 25 feet by 34 feet. The original pews were already second hand when installed. Two wood stoves heated the church until 1947, their wood heater replacements giving way to propane heaters in 1963. Wallpaper was first used in 1902. The "U" shaped rostrum was enlarged in 1924 to hold an organ on its west end. Carpet was added in 1968. The present pulpit dates from 1892, having been built by Rev. G. E. Mitchell.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

The first porch had side steps and a central mounting block. The concrete porch dates from 1913. A huge Oak, lost in the 1950's due to lightning damage, stood southeast of the church

Two interior features are of particular interest, being in the first instance uncommon, and the second a one of a kind instance. A symmetrical coved ceiling in the sanctuary reflects both the skill of the builders and a willingness to provide a plain yet charming interior detail. Each side wall gently curves in to join the 16 foot ceiling. Structurally, this required a raised attic level that is three feet above the entryway attic level. Arched curves bring each wall into a flat ceiling. The ceiling is not further elaborated with any decorative plaster, it is white, to distinguish it from the wallpapered sidewalls.

The second feature is a suspended brick chimney base, round with a decorative pendant decoration is centered above the middle row of pews. Stove flues range east and west from this chimney, servicing the two side heaters. The suspended brick chimney is supported between the two center trusses, hanging from paired 2" x 8" supports and metal tie rods. The stack, with its lower part protruding below the ceiling is suspended below these side joists.

The building is western framed in its construction, with irregularly spaced 2" x 6" studs, often vertically overlapped to stretch on the gable ends. One inch sheathing is used for corner bracing and wall sheathing. Two 2" x 6" boards form the upper plate which supports the trusses. The roof is an interrupted roof and the original wood shingle roof remains beneath the present roof. There is no ridgepole in the roof system. Seven bents (see figure) support the roof between the end walls. Main truss members are 2" x 6", with single and paired 1" x 6" supports.

Outbuildings in addition to the church have been minimal. A wood shed with a partitioned privy in its back end was constructed by the church Ladies Aid in 1928 and demolished six years ago. It stood east of the church. A cinder block replacement is non-contributing. The cinder block foundation, level to the ground, of Reverend Whitenack's failed abortive effort to add a kitchen to the northwest rear of the church in 1948-49. The original church was lighted by a Delco light system with a tank outside of the church. This lighting system replaced kerosene lamps.

Three similar churches remain in Ringgold County, two of which are in this township. Hickory Grove Advent Christian Church stands two and three quarters miles due east, and stands just south of the same east-west road, in Section 23 (northeast quarter). That church, of similar vintage, has less elaborate rounded hoodmolds, is shorter due to the lack of a front hall (its two doors, one for each sex, open directly outside), and features a rear centered chapel. This church is oriented to the south. It lacks any interior elaborations comparable to Middlefork. The third church, also still active, has been both moved (into town) and greatly altered.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Middlefork Methodist Episcopal Church is a locally significant example under Criterion C of an Italianate style influenced rural community frame church. It is significant for its being representative of a once common class of rural religious buildings. It is further significant within its county as the sole surviving and absolutely unchanged example of its building type, one that once numbered forty in Ringgold County alone. One of three active rural churches in the county, Middlefork alone boasts an unaltered plan, and a number of distinctive structural and decorative features. The single story frame church, stands a scant one and a half miles north of the Missouri state line, in southwest Ringgold County. Middlefork Church is the last active and well preserved example of a Nineteenth Century frame white church. It's outstanding degree of physical integrity reflects the congregation's commitment to tradition and to its simple and plain building.

The church was founded following a six week long revival during the spring of 1886. Two area schoolhouses, at Clipper and Rosehill, had sheltered services since the early 1870's. A larger central building replaced these uses. The township cemetery, separate in function from the church, was founded informally in 1858-59, provided land for the new church. The cornerstone was laid in 1886 at the northeast corner of the foundation.

The church was locally built and funds were in hand before the work began. The slogan for the construction effort was "build it to last 100 years" and the overbuilt frame of the church reflects that commitment. Stone for the foundation came from a quarry on the Riley Motsinger farm, sand from Ewing ford, both sites being located just a few miles north of Allendale, Missouri, a two day round trip by wagon. Bricks and lumber came from Bedford, county seat in Taylor County to the west. Two carpenters, W. M. Staton (a member of the Brethren Church at Palestine) and J. A. Saville (Middlefork congregation member) are credited with overseeing the building effort.

An argument over the number of aisles for the sanctuary in October, 1886, led to a congregational pledge to compromise on decisions so as to avoid schisms. This pledge was adhered to until 1951 when seven families left the church. Another church custom is that of never locking the building, leaving it available for private visitation. Dedication followed on Thanksgiving day, 1886. The crowd overflowed the building, and the participants took turns being inside and warming around a bonfire.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

The church served as a local community focal point, Sunday school picnics (involving a parade of decorated wagons, the lead one bearing the church organ, another the choir, on a 10-12 mile one way trip), revivals (most notably 1887, 1903), Sunday School conventions all focused upon the church. Remodeling of the interior came after 1900 with papering, the purchase of three altar chairs in St. Joseph, and the purchase of a piano to replace the organ. These items along with the large pulpit bible and a communion set remain in use. The Ladies Aid organized in early 1927 and raised funds through lunches, sewing and quilting. This group became the Women's Society of Christian Service in 1939 when unification brought the Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal South, and Methodist Protestant churches together. A second unification brought the United Brethren and Methodist churches together in 1968. The women's group disbanded in 1973 due to its low numbers.

Winter services were not offered during the church's early history given the quality of the roads. A parsonage was made available in Redding for the circuit pastor. In 1912, Redding and Middlefork were placed in a separate circuit and Middlefork had weekly afternoon services. The retrenchment consequent of the Depression added Blockton and Platteville and services were reduced to twice monthly. The original circuit was restored in 1947 and an all weather road returned the luxury of regular Sunday services. Economics returned Blockton to the circuit in 1958 and Mt. Ayr was added in 1972. During the Depression monthly "Family Nights" were held as an inexpensive form of recreation and an unstructured social occasion that allowed neighbors to share concerns and to give community support. These continued through the war years and indeed persist today as one of the most durable church traditions. The tradition has embraced a community larger than the church membership itself over time.

Pastors changed rapidly over the church's history. T. A. Aten (1884-86), G. T. Roberts (1906-08), A. M. Eastman (1912-15), Q. W. Amack (1927-29), W. H. Warrior (1930-39), J. E. M. Chambers (1943-45), V. S. Bower (1948-50), Weldon A. Whitenack (1950-54), John M. Latta (1954-56), M. G. Ossman (1956-68), I. G. Wilkins (1958-60), S. G. Sterrett (1961-63), Clarence H. Landis (1963-71), Arthur L. Hill (1975-78) Lynn A. Potter (1978-82) and Edward A. Kail (1982-86). All lasted three or more years (or had terms covering parts of three years). Reverend Whitenack is still warmly remembered for his fervency in attempting to bring change and modernity to the church. His most ambitious project involved constructing a kitchen addition to the rear of the church. He actually got the younger members to lay the foundation before he was stopped by the congregation. His tumultuous years at Middlefork produced the only departure of members from the church. While these events are of recent vintage, they reflect the persistence of the congregation's reliance upon the need to maintain a simple church. In this instance a plain church with no basement facility, no kitchen or even handicapped access, has outlived its many neighboring counterparts.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Contextual Supplement:

Middlefork is one of four active rural or country churches in Ringgold County. Three of these are in the southwest corner of the county:

Wishard Chapel Church, Liberty Township, is located in the center of the county, north of Mount Ayr, the county seat. Built in 1887, the church retains a membership of 61 persons. The building has been considerably altered over time with the addition of a walk in basement and an entryway that covers the front of the building.

Hickory Grove Church, Section 23, Middle Fork Township. Constructed in 1888 and dedicated the next year, this congregation (which dates to 1871) numbers 15 persons. The church is well preserved, but is simpler in plan than Middlefork Methodist Episcopal.

Tent Chapel Church of Christ: Undated, but likely more recent in origin given its simpler windows and overall lines, this building has had a rear addition and a side entryway added. The church is located in the extreme southwest corner of the county, nearly in both Missouri and the next county.

There were some forty churches in rural settings in the county during its history. In addition of the four mentioned above, two others survive in some form. Fry Chapel Methodist Episcopal, formerly in Lotts Creek Twp., was moved to Kellerton, greatly altered, and currently is the Assembly of God church there. Pleasant Hill Assembly of God Church, also in Middle Fork Township, was closed in 1982 and might survive. It has been altered with the addition of a basement and entryway.

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Section number 8 Page 4



Pleasant Hill Church

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Wishard Chapel Church



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Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point ten rods north of the Southeast corner of the West half of the South West Quarter of the South West Quarter in Section 16, Township 67, Range 30 West, thence north 12 rods, thence West 20 rods, thence South 12 rods, thence to the place of beginning, containing 1.5 acres.

Boundary Justification

Includes only the subject church and its historically associated property (as deeded in 1886).

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Continuation Sheet

Section number photo Page 1

Name: Middlefork Methodist Episcopal Church
Address: RR1, Redding, Iowa, Ringgold County
Date: September 1989
Photographer: James E. Jacobsen
Negatives: State Historic Preservation Office
View:

- 1 NW
- 2 N
- 3 NE
- 4 N
- 5 SW
- 6 E
- 7 SE
- 8 NW
- 9 to NE
- 10 Pew
- 11 Suspended Chimney, looking E
- 12 Suspended Chimney, looking SE