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7. DESCRIPTION						
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The first meeting house of the Abyssinian Society, incorporated in 1828 and merged with the Fourth Congregational Church in 1842, was a structure on Newbury Street in Portland. It is said to have been built of brick and stone.

The present church of the descendant organization is the Green Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, built in 1914. This church is located on the northwest corner of Sheridan and Monument Streets in Portland. It is two and a half stories high, built on concrete block which has a rough surface texture. The corners of the building are quoined with concrete block which has a stony pattern. The roof is shingled in asphalt. The windows of the first floor are rectangular with concrete sills and lintels. They are for light. The tall arched windows of the second floor are made of yellow, red and blue stained glass set in a diamond pattern. At either end of the building, a rand window is located above and between the arched windows.

The entrance to the church is on the southeast corner facing Sheridan Street. A short tower, covered with asphalt shingles, pierces the roof over the entrance.

The building next to the church on Sheridan Street serves as a rectory. It is two stories high with a low gable roof. It is shingled, set on a foundation of concrete block like that of which the church is built. It is painted white with red trim.



PERIOD (Check One or More as	Appropriate)			
Pre-Columbian	16th Century		18th Century	
☐ 15th Century	☐ 17th Century		19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicat	ble and Known) 1828,	1835,	organization	; 1914 present buildir
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Abyssinian Society was incorporated in 1828. Its first meeting house was on Summer (now Newbury Street in the section of the city where the greatest part of the Black population lived. In 1835, the Fourth Congregational Church was formed as a separate church by Blacks who had been parishioners of the Second Parish Church. Asa Cummings, then editor of the Congregational newspaper, The Christian Mirror; John W. Chickering, pastor of the High Street Church; Joseph Vail, pastor of the Second Parish Church; and John J. Carruthers, working for the Maine Missionary Society as a general Missionary, were present.

In 1842, the Fourth (or Abyssinian) Congregational Church merged with the Abyssinian Society to form the Abyssinian Congregational Church and Society. In 1891, the church was reorganized and located on Mountfort Street. The present concrete church was dedicated on Sheridan Street in 1914. When it was built, it was considered "one of the most pretentious churches for a Black congregation in New England". In 1943, it was named for Moses Green who was born a slave and worked for fifty-two years at Union Station in Portland.

The Green Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church is the oldest established Black congregation in Maine. The development of the State's historic inventory to date would indicate that this church was the only all Black congregation in Maine History and the only site were physical evidence remains to interpret the life of Black Americans in this state.

Although the present site of the A.M.E. Zion Church is not the original, it is the most interpretive. The present site is the locus of a cultural symbol and one that has great meaning to a proud and resourceful people who have survived for 150 years in an indifferent and sometimes hostile environment. Lacking architectural significance and completely out of context with its surroundings, the church has not been the shelter of great historic events. Instead, the A.M.E. Zion Church on Sheridan Street is a site marker more interpretive and meaningful than the most expensive bronze plaque or marble statuary could ever be.

(See Continuation Sheet)

9. MAJOR	BIBLIOGRAPHICAL	FERENCES							
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Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

What could be more symbolic of the Black Community in Maine who through most of their history have been viewed as out of context with the community that surrounds them and treated with the same second class citizen attitude that was applied to Indians, Irish, and Franco-Americans at different periods.

To apply rigidly the criteria designed to recognize the historic resources of mainstream America to all minority cultures would be an injustice. A small group of minority Americans forced into a social and economic role that did not allow for fine architecture of permanency of residence should not be further penalized for the past mistakes of society as a whole.



Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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