

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

MAY 23 1988

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 "N/A" 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 Free Will Baptist Church and Cemetery  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Church Road  N/A not for publication  
city, town North Islesboro  vicinity  
state Maine code ME county Waldo code 027 zip code 04848

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	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> 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.

Earl J. Furtwangler, S.H. P.O. 5/16/88  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Maine Historic Preservation Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
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.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Beth A. Sarge 9-27-88  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religious/Religious StructureFunerary/Cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religious/Religious StructureFunerary/Cemetery

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granitewalls Wood/Weatherboardroof Asphaltother Flush Boards on Tower

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

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The Free Will Baptist Church is a rectangular frame building that features a two-stage tower crowned by a pyramidal spire and a two-story perpendicular vestry addition at the rear. It is sheathed primarily in weatherboards and rests on a granite block foundation. Of particular note are the richly painted interior walls and ceiling.

The modestly detailed front (south) elevation of the church contains a pair of Greek Revival style entrances separated by a large sixteen-over-twelve double-hung sash window. Deeply recessed, six-panel doors that open into the nave are framed by paneled pilasters that rise to a broad heavily molded entablature. A narrow cornice with short end returns carries around the building. Both side elevations are punctuated by three symmetrically placed sixteen-over-twelve windows with blinds. A flue stack rises between the rear wall and the addition.

Mounted atop the roof ridge at the front of the church is the tower. Its short square base is partially shielded by a narrow pent roof that meets the taller belfry. This unit is covered in flush sheathing, has a single round arched louvered vent in each side and narrow cornerboards with simple brackets at the top corner. The spire rises from a point that is set back from the edge of the belfry.

Projecting slightly from the rear of the church, the vestry was added in 1894. A door is located in the narrow south side and a two-over-two window occupies a similar place on the opposite side of the main church block. A pair of two-over-two windows occupies each story of the east gable end whereas there are only three on the west side. Four small coupled windows are located in the middle of the rear wall.

The nave contains three sections of original wooden pews separated by a pair of side aisles. Late nineteenth century furniture occupies the sanctuary. Without question the most significant aspect of the interior are the decorative painted finishes. In this scheme a beige background highlights the light blue painted panels and their borders. The nave endwall behind the sanctuary contains three tall round arched panels separated by two shorter rectangular ones. Above the centerpiece, which bears an open Bible, and its flanking companions is a border scroll that contains the phrase "I am the

 See continuation sheet

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Continuation Sheet**

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Resurrection and the Life". A rustic motif highlights the border of the rectangular panels whereas a more classically inspired design is utilized around the arched units. The rustic border theme is employed on the side walls both in a narrow strip above the pews and around the panels located between the windows. A long wide multicolor panel with rustic detail and medallions occupies the coved cornice. The ceiling features a central section that is emblazoned with a four point star and oculus and ringed by a foliate border. Narrow rectangular panels that repeat a rustic border motif frame the central area. At the rear of the nave are two entry vestibules separated by a semi-circular niche. A gallery surmounts these spaces.

Surrounding the Church building on three sides is the cemetery. Bordered by a wooden fence, this area of approximately one acre contains the graves of numerous former Islesboro residents. With only a handful of exceptions the monuments consist of modest rectangular markers of granite or marble, some of which feature tributes to the life of the deceased. There are a number of obelisks of varying heights. The grounds contain a variety of randomly placed plant materials.

**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     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Art

c. 1870

c. 1870  
c. 1893-94

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Constructed about 1843 and remodeled in 1893-94, the Free Will Baptist Church and Cemetery on Islesboro is being nominated under National Register criterion C and criteria consideration A as a religious property that is significant for its high artistic value. This importance derives from the remarkably well preserved late nineteenth century stenciled panels that decorate the walls and ceiling. The historically associated cemetery meets criteria consideration D.

The Free Will Baptist Church and Society of Islesboro was organized on June 19, 1821, as a voluntary association for religious purposes. Local histories state that for many years the Baptists met at various locations including the home of Jesse Coombs and a number of neighborhood schoolhouses. By the early 1840s the Baptist community on Islesboro had achieved sufficient strength to consider the construction of a permanent place of worship. Tradition holds that action was taken in 1843 when the existing church is believed to have been raised. However, a deed to the property was not made until April 2, 1845, and it may be that the building was not erected until then./1 It is thought that a local builder, Silas Bunker, was responsible for the construction of the church, but this has not as yet been confirmed./2 In 1894 a two-story addition was made to the rear of the building for use as a vestry and the meeting space of the Free Will Baptist Circle.

Regular year-round services appear to have continued until about 1921. Use and maintenance of the property was subsequently taken up by the Free Will Baptist Sewing Circle and occasional services were held in the summer months. In 1983 this organization founded the non-profit Society for the Preservation of the Free Will Baptist Church of Islesboro which now holds title to the church and surrounding property.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Farrow, J. P., History of Islesborough, Maine. Bangor: Thomas W. Burns. 1893.

History of Islesboro, Maine 1893-1983. Islesboro: Islesboro Historical Society. 1983.

See continuation sheet

**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**

Acree of property 1.4

**UTM References**

A 

1	9
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5	0	8	4	0	0
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4	9	1	0	8	8	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property of 1.4 acres occupies the Town of Islesboro tax map 30, lot 8.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary of the nominated property embraces the lot and adjoining cemetery grounds that are historically associated with the Free Will Baptist Church.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kirk F. Mohny, Architectural Historian  
 organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date April, 1988  
 street & number 55 Capitol Street, Station #65 telephone 207/289-2132  
 city or town Augusta, state Maine zip code 04333

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The primary significance of the church lies in its decorative interior stencils which are among the most complete and best preserved that are known to exist in Maine. Unfortunately, little has been uncovered about their history. One source suggests that they were executed in 1847 under the hand of an itinerant French painter.<sup>/3</sup> However, their stylistic composition is more representative of the period of about 1870, especially as evident in the rustic vine motifs utilized in the borders. Whatever their specific history may be, these stencils illustrate an aspect of architectural adornment that is rarely visible today in Maine. Although a few churches are known to contain stencils, many of these, such as in the case at the Raymond Village Church in Raymond, have suffered subsequent alterations that now obscure this decorative treatment. A number of other churches continue to exhibit their trompe l'oeil finish, but this marks an altogether separate approach to interior detailing.<sup>/4</sup> Therefore, the decorative paintings in Islesboro's Free Will Baptist Church remain as important examples of nineteenth century stylistic techniques that were used to embellish church interiors.

Endnotes

- /1. See Waldo County Deeds, Book 59, Page 9.
- /2. Bunker is credited in one local history as having constructed three churches on the island one of which was presumably the Free Will Baptist Church. J. P. Farrow, History of Islesborough, Maine (Bangor: Thomas W. Burns, 1893), p. 174.
- /3. History of Islesboro, Maine 1893-1983 (Islesboro: Islesboro Historical Society, 1983), p. 48.
- /4. For further information see the National Register nomination for the Readfield Union Meeting House, Readfield, Kennebec County, Maine, a copy of which is on file at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta.