

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUN 19 1984
date entered JUL 19 1984

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

1. Name

historic Jesse Lee Church

and or common

2. Location

street & number ME Route 17, ^{and} corner of the Plains Road N/A not for publication

city, town Readfield, Vt vicinity of

state Maine code 23 county Kennebec code 011

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Readfield United Methodist Church, Att. Rev. Walter Brown

street & number Box 286

city, town Readfield, N/A vicinity of state Maine 04355

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kennebec County Registry of Deeds

street & number

city, town Augusta, state Maine

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maine Historic Resources Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records Maine Historic Preservation Commission

city, town Augusta, state Maine

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date 1825

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Constructed in a traditional rectangular plan, the Jesse Lee Methodist Church has paired entrances on the narrow gable end and clapboard siding. Over the entrance is a belfry with a steeple.

Greek Revival style ornamentation consists of pedimented gable ends and classical pilasters. The church windows consist of large twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash. On the top of the spire is an ornate metal weathervane.

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 type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input 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 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1795 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Jesse Lee Church of 1795 is significant as the first Methodist Church in Maine, a denomination which later spread widely over the state particularly in rural communities, often supplanting the Congregational churches which were descendants of the original Puritan theocracy. Of further importance is that its founding came about as a direct result of the coming to Maine of a tall handsome Virginian missionary, the charismatic Methodist, Jesse Lee.

He preached his first sermon at the home of Nathaniel Whittier where, he reported, "The people were very much melted." Plans were already in the making for the building of a town house on the common lot deeded from James Bowdoin. In the end was built the church, which was erected on that hill, of which Jesse Lee exclaimed, "This is an exalted spot."

In 1825 the building was moved by 50 yoke of oxen 30 rods closer to the road where it now stands. At about the same time it was extensively remodelled in the Greek Revival style.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Readfield Yesterdays, published by the Readfield Bicentennial Commission.
Farmington, 1975.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property $\frac{1}{2}$

Quadrangle name Winthrop

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	9	4	2	7	3	1	0	4	9	1	2	2	9	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

Assessor's Map 36, Lot 56

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frank A. Beard, Historian/Roger G. Reed, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date May, 1984

street & number 55 Capitol Street, Station #65 telephone 207/289-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine 04333

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 *Carol S. Fitzvortz*

title S.H.P.O. date 6/8/84

For NPS use only

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

for Selores Byer
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 7/19/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **JAN 04 1988**
date entered **FEB 18 1988**

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

1. Name

historic Jesse Lee Church

and or common

2. Location

street & number Route 17, corner of the Plains Road N/A not for publication

city, town Readfield, vicinity of

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<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
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courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kennebec County Registry of Deeds

street & number

city, town Augusta, state Maine

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maine Historic Resources Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records Maine Historic Preservation Commission

city, town Augusta, state Maine

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date 1825

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Jesse Lee Church is a rectangular frame building sheathed in weatherboards and crowned by a two-stage tower. The present Greek Revival style appearance is the result of an 1857 remodeling of an eighteenth century meeting house.

Facing south, the facade has a large centrally located fifteen-over-fifteen double-hung sash window with wooden blinds. It is flanked by four-panel doors. These openings, like those throughout the building, are capped by shallow triangular pediments. Paneled corner pilasters rise to the pediment. The belfry which surmounts the roof ridge is composed of a short base with corner pilasters and an entablature supporting the belfry. This belfry has a trio of pilasters at each corner that are linked by wooden blinds. A four sided spire caps the tower.

Both side elevations are identical in composition. The walls are equally divided into three bays each of which contains a fifteen-over-fifteen window and blinds similar to the one on the front. A pair of brick flues rise at the rear of the building. The church rests on a granite foundation.

The interior of the church is modestly finished with woodwork typical of the 1857 period.

A documentary sketch of the church shows that it had a typical meeting house form with doors on one of the long side elevations. Windows were located on two levels and in the gable peak, indicating the existence of an interior gallery. In 1825 the building was moved to the present site, just south of the original location. At that time a gable roofed vestibule containing stairs was appended to the entrance and new pews placed inside. Finally, in 1857 the building was turned so that its original east end faced south, the galleries were removed, the building lowered five feet and the tower was added. The church thereby achieved its present configuration.

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 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
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<input 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1795, 1825, 1857 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The significance of the Jesse Lee Church in Readfield derives in part from the fact that a large portion of the building dates from 1794, the year in which it became the first Methodist meeting house erected in the Province of Maine. It bears architectural significance as a handsomely proportioned and well preserved example of a rural Maine church building from the late 1850s.

The history of Methodism in Maine is intimately related to the efforts of an itinerant preacher named Jesse Lee (1758-1816). Born in Prince George's County, Virginia, Lee preached in a number of southern and mid-Atlantic states prior to 1789 when he began a long career in New England./1 In 1793 Lee was appointed:

...to the Privince of Maine, to travel through that country, or form a circuit where I thought best. --As there had never been any Methodist preaching there, we had no one to give us a particular account of the place or people;.../2

After touring through a number of communities, Lee formed the Readfield circuit on the west side of the Kennebec River. The first meeting was held in the community of Readfield on October 19, 1793./3

In his history of Methodism in the United States Lee states that:

The first meeting-house which was built in the Province of Maine for the Methodists, was that in Readfield, which was begun in the fall of 1794, and was nearly covered in by the first of December./4

The building was dedicated on June 21, 1795. An article about the Church appeared in the April 9, 1896, edition of the Lewiston Evening Journal, and it contained a sketch of the building as it appeared in 1825. By that time a vestibule had been attached to one side of the church, but it otherwise retained the eighteenth century meeting house form both on the exterior and the interior. In 1825 the building had also been moved a short distance to the south of its original site. Substantial remodeling took place in 1857 when the Church achieved its present appearance.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Allen, Stephen. History of Methodism in Maine: 1793-1886. Augusta: Charles E. Nash, 1887.
Lee, Jesse. A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America. Baltimore: McGill & Cline, Booksellers, 1810.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property $\frac{1}{2}$

Quadrangle name Winthrop

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	9	4	2	7	3	1	0	4	9	1	2	2	9	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Assessor's Map 36, Lot 56.

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kirk F. Mohney, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date December, 1987

street & number 55 Capitol Street, Station #65 telephone 207/289-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine 04333

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 *Carol S. Peterson*

title S.H.P.O. date 12/29/87

For NPS use only

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

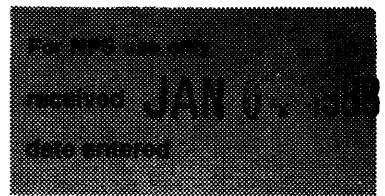
Patrick Andrus date 2/18/88
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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JESSE LEE CHURCH

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

Architecturally, the Jesse Lee Church retains to a remarkably intact degree its late Greek Revival style form and detailing as applied to the eighteenth century frame. Greek Revival elements are plainly visible in the pediment, cornice, pilasters, and tower. The somewhat reduced scale of these features, however, clearly points to the transitional position of this building. This fact is illustrated by a comparison with other rural churches such as the 1831 Greek Revival Stetson Union Church (N.R., 7/15/81) and the 1877-1881 Congregational Church of Edgecomb (N.R., 6/12/87). In the former example the bold, overtly stated features of the Greek Revival are evident throughout not only the detailing, but also the overall scheme of the plan. The church in Edgecomb, on the other hand is distinctly Italianate in character, although it continues to borrow the traditional rectangular building form as its major component. The Jesse Lee Church also retains the large fifteen-over-fifteen windows, that may date to the Federal period remodeling.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

JESSE LEE CHURCH

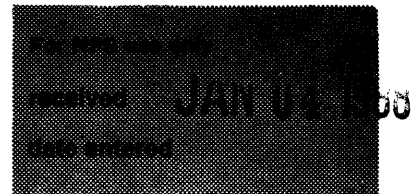
Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

3



Endnotes

- /1. Stephen Allen, History of Methodism in Maine: 1793-1886 (Augusta: Charles E. Nash, 1887), pp. 7-8.
- /2. Jesse Lee, A Short History of the Methodists in the United States of America: Beginning in 1766, and Continued Till 1809 to Which is Prefixed a Brief Account of Their Rise in England in the Year 1729 + c (Baltimore: MCGill & Cline, Book-Sellers, 1810), p. 213, hereinafter cited as Lee, A Short History.
- /3. Lee, A Short History, p. 215.
- /4. Lee, A Short History, pp. 215-16.