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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

AUG 22 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 Mary Jenkins Community Praise House other names/site number

2. Location

street & number On SC Sec Rd 74, 2.1 miles N of its junction w/ U.S. not for publication city, town St. Helena Island Hwy. 21 vicinity state South Carolina code 045 county Beaufort code 013 zip code 29920

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic Resources of St. Helena Island, c1740-c1935 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. Signature of certifying official: Mary W. Edmonds Date: 8/11/88 State or Federal agency and bureau: George L. Vogt, State Historic Preservation Officer, S. C. Dept. of Archives & History

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. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/religious structure

Social/meeting hall

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete pier

walls Wood/Weatherboard

roof Tin

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

This praise house conforms to the general description of the property type "Buildings Associated with Religious Life", property subtype "Praise Houses".

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

 nationally     statewide     locallyApplicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ArchitectureReligionSocial HistoryEthnic Heritage/Black

Period of Significance

c. 1900 - c. 1935

Significant Dates

c. 1900

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.

The Mary Jenkins Community Praise House, built c. 1900, is significant as one of four known extant praise houses on St. Helena Island. It is historically and culturally significant for its central place in the religious and social life of black islanders; it also represents a vernacular architectural form that has survived since the antebellum era.

Praise houses are a phenomenon of the South Carolina Sea Islands. They were first established on St. Helena plantations in the antebellum period, as slaves used small frame houses or other buildings as places to meet and to worship. After they became freedmen, the blacks built praise houses on or near the old plantations, in most instances calling their community by the name of the former plantation or plantation owner (Frogmore or Mary Jenkins, for example). Although the extant praise houses date from c. 1900, their function has persisted since before emancipation and the basic architectural form has been retained. Since there were, and are, few formal church buildings on St. Helena Island, most islanders could only walk or ride to the main church on Sunday morning. For other meetings or services, praise houses were built in each of the communities created by the former plantations, and services were held on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday nights, as well as the Watch Night Service each New Year's Eve. A typical service might consist of singing, prayer, perhaps a member's testimony of a religious experience, and almost always ending with a "shout". This was an acapella song, most often a call from the leader with a response from the members, beginning slowly, and building to an emotional peak accompanied by vigorous hand-clapping and dancing. Members and observers were quick, however, to point out the crucial difference between a shout and a dance. As long as one's feet did not cross during the shout, it was a joyous act of praise and not a worldly thing; if the feet crossed, then

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

### Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

### Specify repository:

SC Department of Archives & History

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

### UTM References

A 

1	7	5	4	1	3	2	0	3	5	8	7	9	8	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nomination is shown as the black line on the accompanying Beaufort County Tax Map, St. Helena Sheet # 11, Parcel 30, drawn at a scale of 1" = 400'.

See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the praise house and its immediate setting.

See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title J. Tracy Power, NR Historian/Sherry Piland, NR Architectural Historian  
organization SC Department of Archives and History date 15 February 1988  
street & number PO Box 11669 telephone (803) 734-8608  
city or town Columbia state SC zip code 29211

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it became dancing, which was considered by many to be bad. There were as many as twenty-five praise houses on the island as recently as 1932; one sociologist reported that the praise houses on St. Helena were "unique and interesting supplements" to the seven churches there. For many islanders, these were the main public buildings on St. Helena, in addition to Brick Church and Penn School. The praise houses also served as centers of information; community meetings were often held in them in addition to religious services.(1) Some of the praise houses are still being used for services and meetings today.

Kit Chaplin built this praise house c. 1900; Paris Capers, born in 1863, was one of the early elders. Members of Ebenezer Baptist Church still attend services here today; a cow bell, which is still in the praise house, has been rung for many years to alert the members to a service or meeting.(2)

Although the praise house is a religious property, it is eligible for the National Register, because it possesses architectural, historical, and cultural significance.

### NOTES

(1) Edith M. Dabbs, Sea Island Diary: A History of St. Helena Island (Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, Publishers, 1983), pp. 108-112, 154, 181, 188; Rossa B. Cooley, School Acres: An Adventure in Rural Education (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), pp. 150-52; Clyde Vernon Kiser, Sea Island to City: A Study of St. Helena Islanders in Harlem and Other Urban Centers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 79; Guion Griffis Johnson, A Social History of the Sea Islands with Special Reference to St. Helena Island, South Carolina (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), pp. 147-51, 193, 208-10; T.J. Woofter, Jr., Black Yeomanry: Life on St. Helena Island (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1930), 236-39; Elizabeth Jacoway, Yankee Missionaries in the South: The Penn School Experiment (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), pp. 104-5; Interview with Agnes Sherman and Helen Ladson, Penn Center, St. Helena Island, 3 November 1987; Interview with David Henderson, Mary Jenkins Community Praise House, St. Helena Island, S.C., 4 November 1987.

(2) Dabbs, p. 193; Interview with David Henderson, Mary Jenkins Community Praise House, St. Helena Island, S.C., 4 November 1987.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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The following information is the same for each of the photographs:

Name of property: Mary Jenkins Community Praise House (Historic  
Resources of St. Helena Island, c. 1740-c. 1935  
multiple property listing)

Location of property: Beaufort County, South Carolina

Photographer: South Carolina Department of Archives and History  
Staff

Location of negative: South Carolina Department of Archives and  
History

Additional information for each photograph follows:

1. Mary Jenkins Community Praise House  
November 1987  
Oblique, view facing northeast.