

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Bethel Church

other names/site number New Bethel Church; Bethel Methodist Church

**2. Location**

street & number Missouri Highway T [n/a] not for publication

city or town Labadie [X] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Franklin code 071 zip code 63055

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally.

( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ]. )

Claire F. Blackwell 21 December 1992  
Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell, Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ]. )

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date

[ ] 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

[ ] See continuation sheet [ ].

Bethel Church  
Name of Property

Franklin County, Missouri  
County and State

### 5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	0	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	0	0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

### 6. Function or Use

Historic Function

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

RELIGION/religious facility

SOCIAL/meeting hall

### 7. Description

Architectural Classification

Greek Revival

Materials

foundation limestone

walls brick

roof slate

other n/a

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Bethel Church  
Name of Property

Franklin County, Missouri  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

Property is:

☒ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

Architecture

### Periods of Significance

1868

### Significant Dates

1868

### Significant Person(s)

n/a

### Cultural Affiliation

n/a

### Architect/Builder

unknown

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 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:

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State

---

**SUMMARY:** The Bethel Church is located in Franklin County, on Missouri Highway T, 1½ miles west of the village of Labadie. The red brick building, covered by a slate roof, rests on a quarried limestone block foundation. The exterior of the building remains in excellent condition and reflects a simplicity of the environment and the congregation at its time of origin. Constructed in 1868 in the Greek Revival style, the one-story building is rectangular in plan (37' 9" wide X 59' 6" long X 21' 9" high exterior dimensions). Its height extends to 33' at the peak of the gable roof. There is a balcony over the narthex and ushers' room. Despite its small scale, the Bethel Church conveys the strict formalism of its Greek Revival design. Although the setting has been somewhat compromised by recent development, the Bethel Church retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, association, and location.

**NARRATIVE:** The Bethel Church stands quietly on a hilltop overlooking the church cemetery, located south of the church across Missouri Highway T, as a silent witness and constant reminder of another date and time. Junior O'Brien (George Phillips), who was killed in action on March 14, 1945, and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously, is buried here in Bethel Cemetery. The main entrance to the old church faces south and is accessible directly from Highway T. On the adjacent property to the west is a small one-story frame residential building, currently unoccupied, and a small two-story wood frame residential building formerly used as the original schoolhouse for this area. The adjacent property to the east is a residential development consisting of three acre sites. The adjacent property to the north is open lawn and slopes away from the old church, providing a pleasant view toward open pasture land and the wooded area beyond. The entire site is lawn area with several large trees. There are no paved drives or parking areas.

The exterior features of this fine old church are very basic and consist of locally made red brick facing at the exterior walls laid in a common bond with header courses at every seventh course and bearing on a limestone foundation. The three bay facade, or south elevation includes projecting brick pilasters with brick corbelling above the high window openings and segmental brick arches directly above the high window openings and the main entrance doors. A small arched window is above the main entrance and was originally glazed. The gable roof fascia includes a wood crown molding at each side. The open bell tower is wood frame and with very simple detail. The main entrance doors provide the only access to the interior. The pair of solid wood doors have raised applied mouldings and are fitted with the original lockset. A glazed

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State

---

transom above the exterior doors consists of wood mutin bars on a diagonal pattern glazed with clear glass.

The east and west side elevations of the building consist of five bays with similar brick facing. The large window openings consist of wood double-hung windows (9 clear glass lites over 9) with arched wooden fan louvers immediately above the windows painted a deep green accent color. All window openings have brick arches complementing the profile of the fan louvers, usually found in wood frame buildings. A recess in the masonry occurs at the east elevation similar to a typical window opening in size. This recess occurs in front of the stairs leading up to the balcony and is simply incorporated in the design to carry out the rhythm of the fenestration pattern.

The masonry arches are uncommon in that the bricks are four inches long in lieu of eight inch units normally used in classical design. The back-up masonry behind the fan louvers is supported by large hand-hewn timbers. The eaves, fascia, and soffit are wood construction and are painted white. A large wood brick moulding at the soffit level will be installed to match the original. The metal gutters are half round in profile and have circular metal downspouts at the north end which drain partially into an old cistern on the site.

The north, or rear, elevation is brick facing with no masonry openings. The two masonry flues are flush with the rear wall and extend above the gable roof fascia. The quarried limestone foundation is visible at all elevations and appears to be a broken range with tight joints. The steps at the main entrance are presently concrete which may have been placed over existing stone steps.

Interior: The narthex is rectangular in plan with a small ushers' room at the west end. Access to the nave is by wood and cloth covered doors at each end of the narthex. The floor is exposed wood strip with random widths ranging from 3½" to 5¼" widths without base. The white walls and ceiling are a smooth plaster finish.

The nave is rectangular in plan and consists of three rows of wooden pews with two aisles leading directly to the north end of the building. The ceiling is smooth plaster and approximately 19' 8" above the nave floor and extends to the rear and over the balcony. The walls are smooth plaster finish extending

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 3

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State

---

from the ceiling down to a wood wainscot approximately 3' above the floor line. The wood wainscot appears to be tongue and groove and beaded with a continuous horizontal chair rail moulding that ties in with the typical window stool profile. The floor is exposed wood strip ranging in width from 3½" to 5¼". The nave contains two old black cast-iron wood stoves with exposed vertical and horizontal flue pipes leading to the north, or rear, end of the building. The wood stoves appear to be original and are presently used every December at the annual Christmas carol program. One suspended ornamental iron kerosene chandelier with four glass chimney globes is located at the front of the nave. The side walls of the nave have large wooden double-hung windows (9 glass lites over 9) with a large wood entablature above each opening.

The chancel at the north end is partially elevated (3 risers) above the floor level of the nave. A low wooden chancel rail wraps around three sides of a one step platform. The wood lectern is at the highest level of the chancel and the face has three Gothic style arches in relief form. The lectern is flanked by two wood stands of matching design and with a kerosene lamp on each stand. A circular wood table sets behind the chancel rail. The carpet floor material at the chancel platform is very worn and beyond repair. This area will receive new carpet in the future and with material keeping with the original interior decor.

The side areas of the chancel are at the floor level of the nave and contain wooden pews for use by the choir. An antique organ is located at the east side of the chancel and has been recently restored and is used to accompany community singing.

The balcony is above the narthex and extends across the entire width of the building. The wooden balcony rail is solid in appearance and very simple in design. The finish appears to match the chancel rail. According to elderly natives of this area, the balcony was originally used by former slaves at time of worship. Access to the balcony is by means of a wood stair extending up from the narthex. The church bell is rung by pulling a rope from the balcony level.

The renovation work thus far includes exterior work only. This includes the following items.:

- A. Replacement of cement asbestos slate roof tiles, only as required to prevent leakage.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 4

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State

---

- B. Replacement and painting of deteriorated fascias and soffits with new wood material styled in the same manner as the original fascias and soffits.
- C. Replacement of deteriorated gutters with new half-round metal gutters similar in shape to the original gutters. Existing circular downspouts have been restored, painted, and reinstalled.
- D. Restoration of all four existing windows on the east elevation, including wood frames, reglazing of all sash, and painting of same. Restoration of all fan louvers and painting of louvers and frames above all windows.
- E. Replacement of all wood sash at all five existing windows on the west elevation (fabricated to match original sash). Restoration of all wood frames at all window openings and painting of same. Restoration of all wood fan louvers and painting of louvers and frames above several windows.
- F. Selected tuckpointing and broken brick replacement of all exterior elevations to match original brickwork.
- G. Tuckpointing of the exposed stone foundation.
- H. Begin restoration of the main entrance doors with one door completed.
- I. Begin restoration of one high window at the south elevation.
- J. Begin restoration of the wood fascia at the gable ends of the facade, or south elevation.

The interior renovation has not begun. It is the intent of the Friends of Old Bethel to begin with patching the plaster ceiling and walls and painting all plaster surfaces. The church does not have electrical power or light fixtures and an interior plumbing system has not been installed. The interior of the building remains substantially as it appeared at the turn of the century. It is the intent of the Friends of Old Bethel/Labadie Area to maintain the integrity of this fine old church.

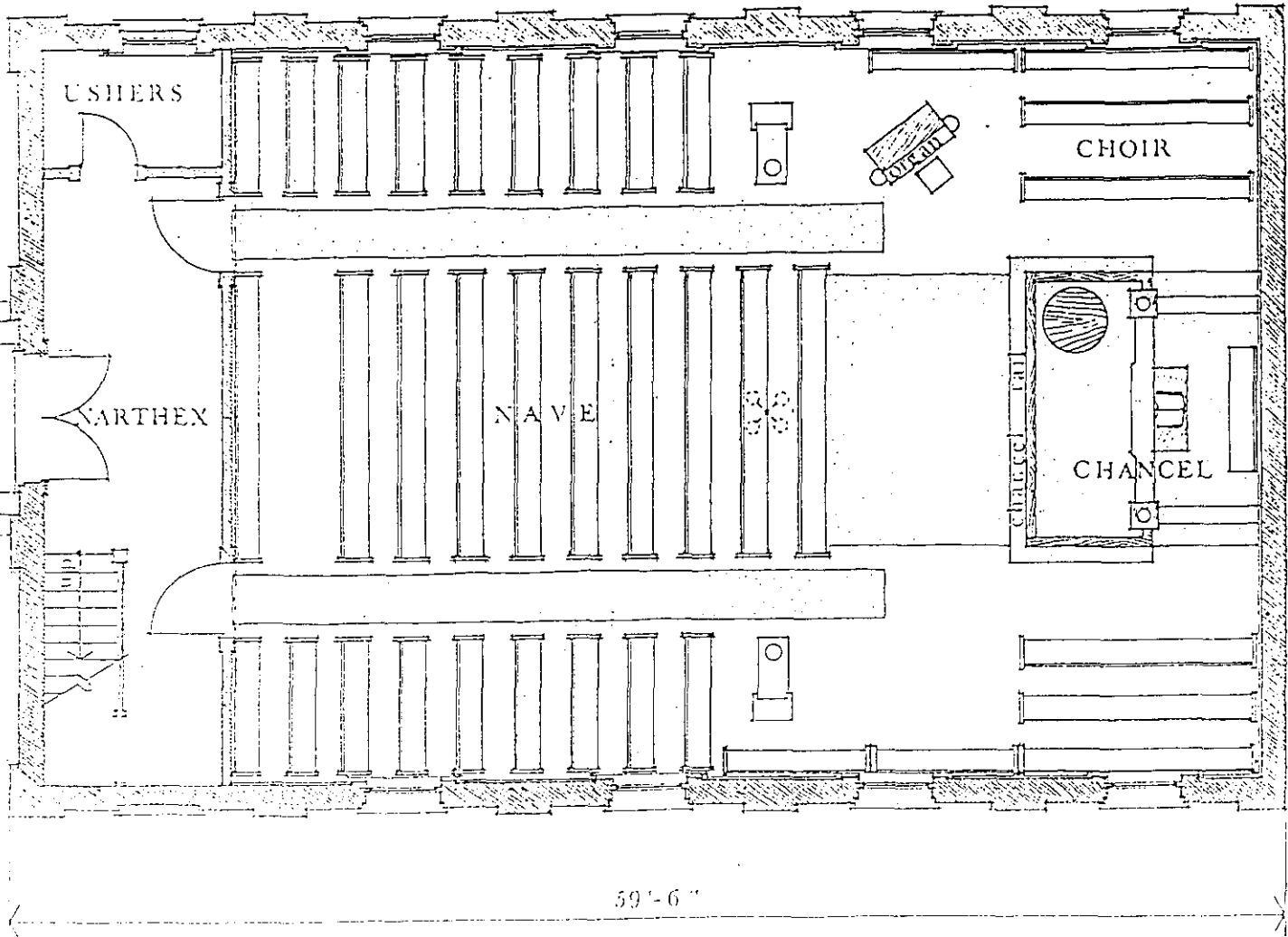
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 5

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State



(23)



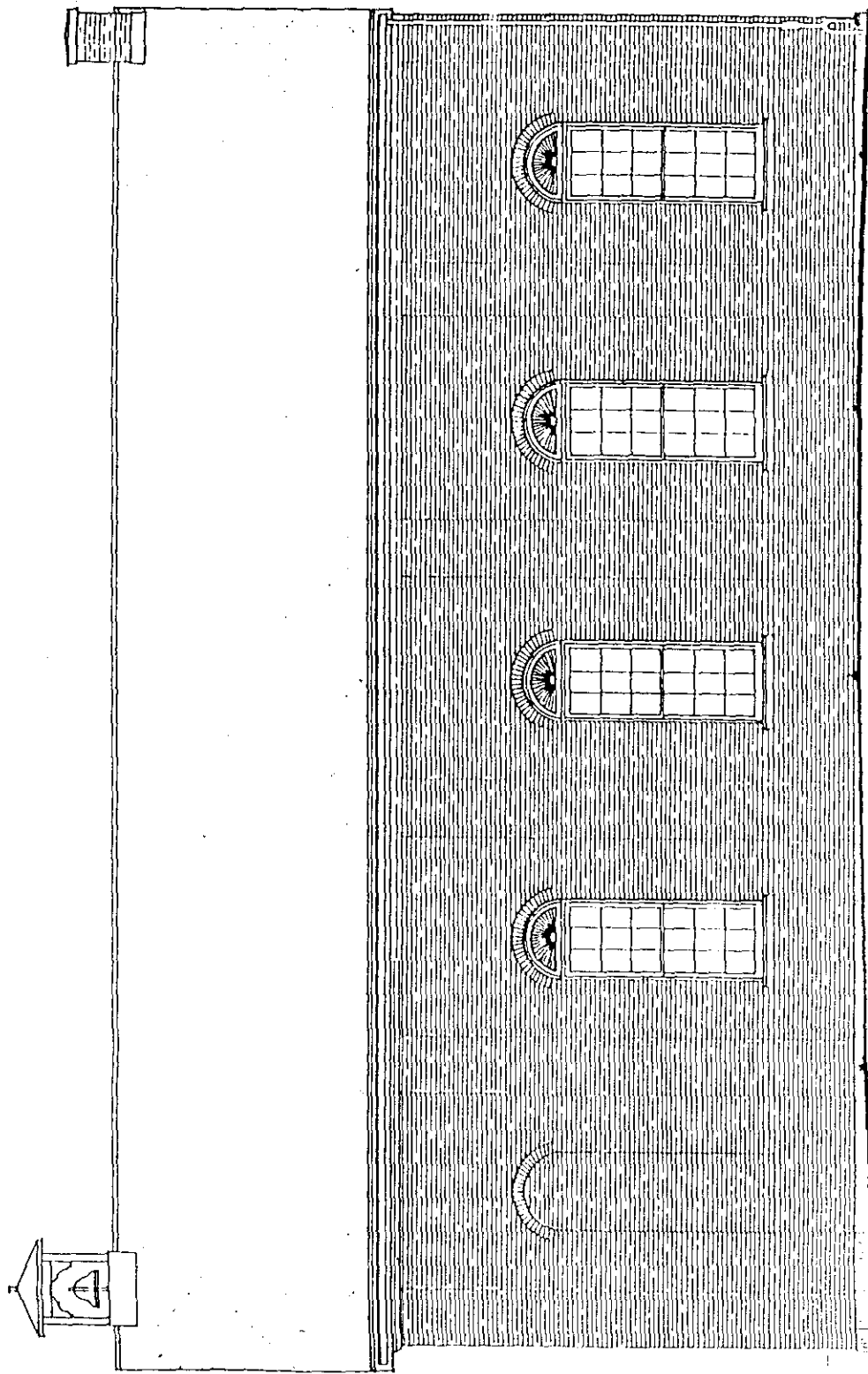
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 6

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State



EAST ELEVATION

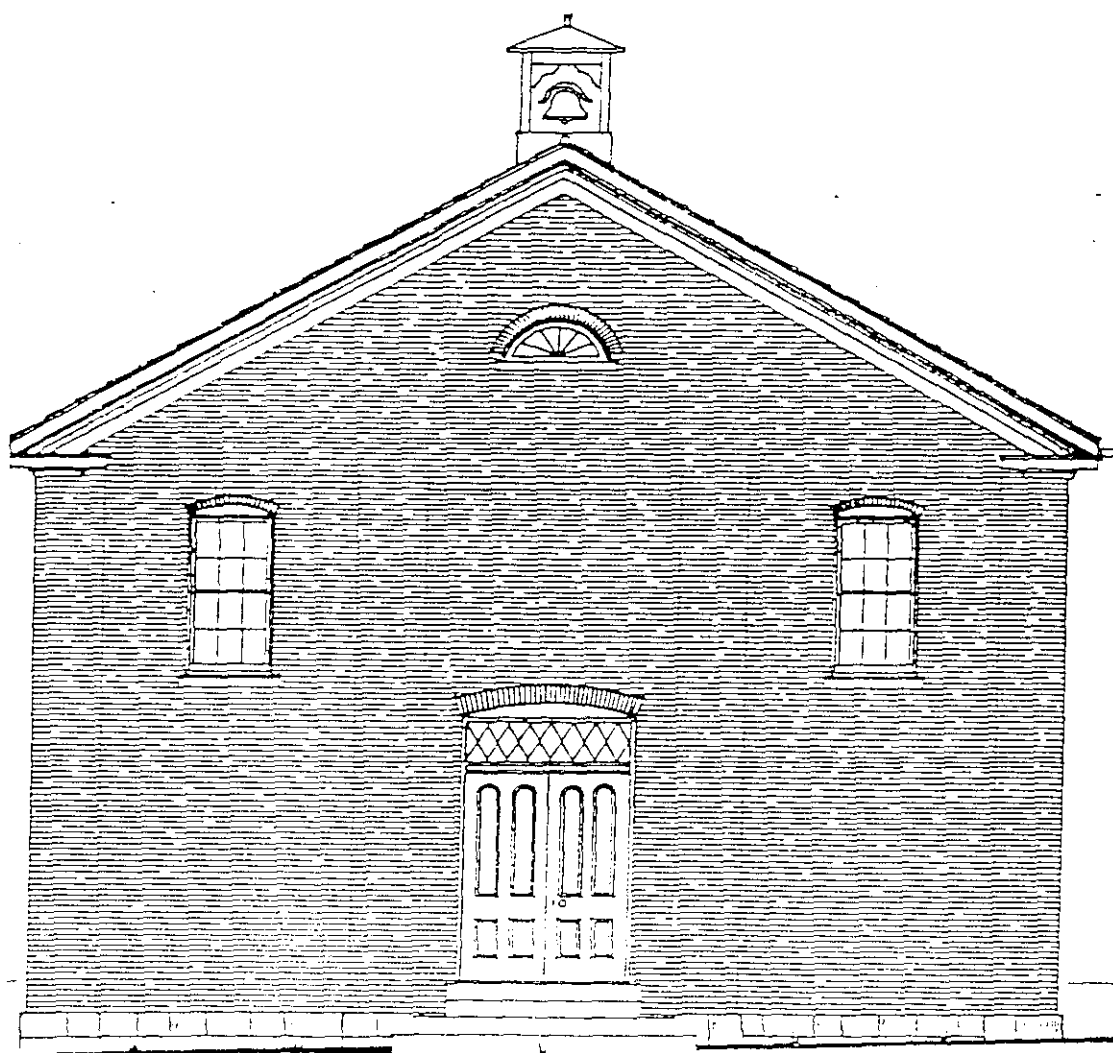
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 7

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State



SOUTH ELEVATION

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 8

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State

**SUMMARY:** Bethel Church, later the Bethel Methodist Church, located in Franklin County, Missouri, on Highway T, 1.5 miles west of Labadie, is significant under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE as a largely intact example of the Greek Revival style. The simple rectangular block shape without external ornament, bilateral symmetry and low pitched, temple-like roof of the Bethel Church are classical characteristics of the Greek Revival style.<sup>1</sup> The temple form was further implied by the engaged square pillars which frame door and window openings on three elevations. High ceilings, large windows with large panes, and white-painted interior also accentuated the style.<sup>2</sup> In the design of churches, the functional and formal style was popular with all denominations from 1825 through the 1860s, and, despite its small scale, the Bethel Methodist Church utilized many of the characteristic features of the style.

**NARRATIVE:** In August 1867, the construction of the Bethel Methodist Church was begun and it was completed in the autumn of 1868. After completion, Bethel Church was dedicated in a special service by Bishop Marvin. The first pastor to serve the church was the Reverend J.E. Godbey. It is also believed that Godbey's two children were the first to be buried in the newly-formed Bethel Cemetery, which is located across Highway T from the church. The red brick buildings, which sits on a rock foundation, was built by several of the congregation members. The architect is unknown.

The church is furnished with wooden pews, kerosene lamps and chandeliers, two wood-burning stoves, an ornately carved organ, a small bell tower, a large Bible for the pulpit, and walnut stands for caskets. The church contains a segregated balcony for African-American members above the narthex. Prior to Emancipation such segregated balconies were labeled slave balconies, and, despite the emancipation of Missouri slaves in January 1865, use of the term for the Bethel balcony has persisted even in present usage. The Bethel Church is one of only three Methodist churches in the state which retains its segregated balcony.

---

<sup>1</sup>Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1969), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944; reprint ed., New York: Dover Publications, 1964), p. 10.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 9

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State

---

The church also features a mourner's bench that is situated near the pulpit. During the periodic protracted meetings that were held to revive the church members and attract new members, the newcomers would kneel and ask for forgiveness at the mourner's bench along with the pastor and some of the congregation members.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:** This church, the "mother church" of Methodism in Franklin County, originated from a camp ground established by Judge Henry Brown on his farm in 1823. In 1814, Judge Brown and his brother, Joseph Brown, were commissioned by the government to survey the Territory of Missouri in anticipation of its eventual organization into a state. At this time there were not any places of worship in this section of the territory. The Methodist Conference, located in the states of Tennessee and Kentucky, had sent out a few ministers to the territory as early as 1805, but few had traveled this far west on the south side of the Missouri River. In 1807, the area south of the Missouri River, including what became Labadie, was designated the Meramec Circuit, St. Louis District. In 1823, Judge Brown, a religious man, donated the ground for "Brown's Campground," located approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of the village of Boles, Missouri, near Brown's Spring. All races, white, red, and black, worshiped here. The three original ministers were Jessie Green, Andrew Monroe, and W.W. Redment. In 1833, Judge Brown donated another piece of ground for a log church, laying  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles southeast of the campground, presently owned by Freida Casey. The log church was completed in 1840 and named Bethel Church. Services were held in this church until 1868.

In 1866, the Meramec Circuit was renamed the Labadie Circuit. In July 1867, it was decided that the log church was no longer adequate and that a new church should be built. Accordingly, a parcel of ground was purchased from C.C. Jones and a new church erected. Construction was completed in the fall of 1868. The new Bethel Church, later the Bethel Methodist Church, was active until 1891, when a new Methodist church was constructed in the village of Labadie. Bethel Methodist Church was inactive for most of the 1900s except for an occasional wedding or funeral.

On August 3, 1988, the Friends of Old Bethel/Labadie Area was incorporated in the State of Missouri as a non-profit corporation. Shortly thereafter, the Methodist Church in Labadie deeded the Bethel Methodist Church to the Friends of Old Bethel/Labadie Area.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 10

Bethel Methodist Church  
name of property

Franklin County, Missouri  
county and State

---

---

**Verbal Boundary Description:** Beginning at the intersection of the west boundary line of U.S. Survey 976, known as the William F. Fulleton Grant, and Missouri Highway T, proceed North 25 degrees, 43 minutes and 31 seconds West along the property line of U.S. Survey 976 261.32 feet; then proceed west 50.16 feet; then proceed South 10 degrees 45 minutes and 26 seconds East 251.09 feet to the highway right-of-way; then proceed east 121.48 feet along the highway right-of-way to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary includes all the property historically associated with the nominated resource.

Bethel Church  
Name of Property

Franklin County, Missouri  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

#### UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
<u>15</u>	<u>684930</u>	<u>4265280</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing
<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>

[ ] See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Glenn J. Warnebold/President  
organization Friends of Old Bethel/Labadie Area date September 30, 1992  
street & number 277 Clarkson Executive Park telephone 314/227-4535  
city or town Ellisville state Missouri zip code 63011

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

#### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

#### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Friends of Old Bethel/Labadie, c/o John Mickleto  
street & number 11 Laretto Ridge Drive telephone 314/742-5139  
city or town Labadie state Missouri zip code 63055

