

## Norman, Jeremiah <sup>[1]</sup>

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## Norman, Jeremiah

by Durward T. Stokes, 1991

**17, Oct. 1771–30 Oct. 1843**

Jeremiah Norman, pioneer minister of the [Methodist](#)<sup>[2]</sup> Episcopal church in Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, was born in [Tyrrell County](#)<sup>[3]</sup>, the son of Mary Norman, whose maiden name is unknown. Evidence is virtually conclusive that his paternal grandparents were Jeremiah and Priscilla Long Norman and that his father was one of their two sons, Thomas or Joshua. Mary Norman was a widow when she died in 1787, leaving her personal property, which included no slaves, to be divided among her surviving eight children—Zeruiah, Kiziah, Susanna, Priscilla, Joel, James, Simeon, and Jeremiah—and the children of her daughter, Mrs. Daniel Garrett, who apparently died before her mother. The legacies consisted of useful household goods, indicating that the Norman family enjoyed a comfortable, though not luxurious, rural life.

Although the details of Jeremiah's schooling are unknown, the journal that he kept from 1793 to 1801 is evidence that he was fairly well educated, was an avid reader of the classics and theological literature, and had received musical training. His religious background was undoubtedly Anglican, as he always showed great respect for "the old Church" and for the Protestant Episcopal church, but he became an enthusiastic member of the Methodist Society. In 1792 he decided to enter the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal church and was assigned by its officials to the Russell Circuit, in Virginia, which included territory in Botetourt and Bedford counties.

Disillusioned after a year's experience as an itinerant, Norman returned to eastern North Carolina. Through 1796 he occupied himself by teaching a singing school and a reading school and preaching when invited to do so in Tyrrell, Martin, and adjacent counties. He maintained his fellowship with the Methodists, met Bishop [Francis Asbury](#)<sup>[4]</sup>, and in 1797 journeyed to Charleston, S.C., in the company of the Reverend Jesse Lee, who had preached the first Methodist sermon in that city a few years earlier.

At the Methodist Conference in Charleston, Norman decided to return to the itinerancy of his church and was assigned to the Bush River Circuit in South Carolina in 1798. Later that year, because of his progress in the new station, the episcopacy sent him to Augusta, Ga., to serve as a pioneer Methodist missionary. Another emigrant from North Carolina, the Reverend [Adam Boyd](#)<sup>[5]</sup>, was already in that city attempting to revive an Anglican parish, and Norman supported the Episcopalian as much as he could while concentrating on his missionary project. By the end of a year, he had established the Augusta Methodist Circuit. Since then, Norman has been known as the father of Methodism in the Augusta area.

In 1799 Norman was assigned to the Broad River Circuit in South Carolina and in 1800 to the Bladen Circuit in North Carolina, after which he left the itinerancy and became a local preacher for the remainder of his life. During this period, he attended the General Conference of the Methodist church in Baltimore, where he associated with most of the Methodist clergy of the time. He continued to praise his friend, Bishop Asbury, [Asbury, Francis](#)<sup>[4]</sup> but was somewhat critical of Bishop Thomas Coke when he met him.

Sometime after 1800 Norman married Elizabeth Woodberry, the daughter of the affluent Richard Woodberry of Marion District, S.C. They had three children, whose names are unknown, before Elizabeth died. Prior to 1817 Norman married Mary Haynes of [Bladen County](#)<sup>[6]</sup> and became the father of Sarah Bailey, Carolina Emily, and Thomas James. The family lived in Bladen on Mrs. Norman's plantation, Brompton, which was also the site of the unfinished building begun by royal governor [Gabriel Johnston](#)<sup>[7]</sup> for his official residence. All members of the Norman family were buried in a private cemetery on this farm. Jeremiah's tombstone contains the simple epitaph, "50 years a Methodist minister."

In addition to relating Norman's contributions to southern religious life as a dedicated Christian minister, the journal that he kept has historical significance. The clergyman's descriptions of the rigors and discouragements encountered by the Methodist itinerants give a clear picture of the hardships they endured, and his vignettes of people and places, such as [Tryon Palace](#)<sup>[8]</sup> and [Brunswick](#)<sup>[9]</sup>, are intriguing to students of history.

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