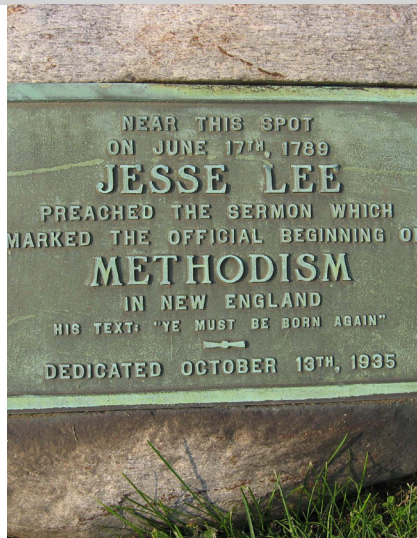




Jesse Lee

*Methodist Apostle to
New England*

1758-1816



Rev. Jesse Lee was a commanding figure, standing more than six feet tall and tipping the scales at more than 250 pounds. Since he had been one of Francis Asbury's first traveling companions, Bishop Asbury knew Lee well, and in 1789 assigned him to take Methodism into New England.

On June 17, 1789, Lee arrived in Norwalk, CT and began preaching on a rise at the edge of town. An eye-witness reported:

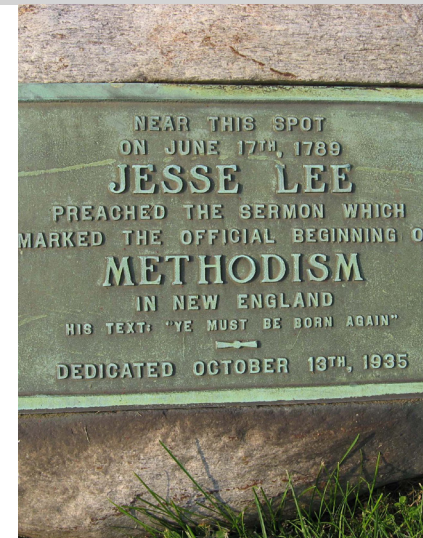
When he stood up in the open air and began to sing, I knew not what it meant. I drew near, however, to listen, and thought the prayer was the best I had ever heard.... But when he entered upon the subject-matter of his text, it was with such an easy, natural flow of expression, and in such a tone of voice, that I could not refrain from weeping.... I heard him again, and thought I could follow him to the ends of the earth. (over)



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(Jesse Lee, cont.)

Once when he preached in Weston, Lee had an unusually large turnout. He learned that the local minister had warned his congregation about the evils of Methodism, and as a result, the parishioners decided to come and hear Lee for themselves!

For Discussion

- What did Jesse Lee offer the residents of New England that they did not have in the established churches there?
- Preaching outside was a radical activity, but integral to the rapid spread of Methodism. What would a radical preaching style look like today?
- As a charismatic speaker, Lee was able to connect with his listeners on both a theological and an emotional level. Would a similar speaking style appeal to today's congregations?



Telling Our Stories

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