

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

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

For NPS use only
received **JL 29 1983**
date entered **9/12/83**

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

1. Name

historic Isaacson Building

and/or common Greer Hotel

2. Location

street & number 37 Commercial Street N/A not for publication

city, town St. Johns N/A vicinity of

state Arizona code 04 county Apache code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: unoccupied

4. Owner of Property

name Valera Goesling

street & number P.O. Box 785

city, town St. Johns N/A vicinity of state Arizona 85936

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Apache County Courthouse

street & number

city, town St. Johns state Arizona 85936

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Little Colorado River Historic Site has this property been determined eligible? yes no
Survey

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Arizona State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Arizona State Parks Board
1688 West Adams Phoenix state Arizona 85007

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY:

The Isaacson Building, constructed in 1918, is generally characterized as a rectangular, two story commercial structure, 30'x80', built of locally quarried, textured granite. It is located on the main street of St. Johns, Arizona, a small ranching community in the Little Colorado River Valley in the northeastern sector of the state.

Exterior:

Stylistically, the Isaacson Building reads as a vernacular, early twentieth century commercial building distinguished by an evenly coursed, rusticated stone facade and a simple stepped parapet. The construction date, 1918, is indicated on a carved inscription stone centrally located below the parapet.

The five bay store front is skewed to the angle of the street and features a raised central entry with double doors. This is framed on the east by two plate glass display windows and on the west by a single window and a narrow entry providing access to the second floor. All openings are framed by stone piers and retain their original wood framing. The windows have concrete sills, and a concrete lintel course extends across the facade. The west entry features a double transom with the upper unit enclosed by a finely detailed, leaded glass window. Similar leaded glass transoms were in place above the windows but were removed for restoration.

Second floor openings are four one-over-one sash windows with stone sills and lintels. The stepped parapet is articulated by coping of the same cut granite as the wall.

Of particular interest is the variegated nature of the stone which, in combination with the rough texture, adds a visual complexity to the otherwise straightforward facade.

The west elevation is of randomly coursed ashlar construction punctuated by window and door openings. The first floor includes three small openings placed high in the wall toward the front, a doorway, and, to the rear, paired one-over-one sash windows. The second floor fenestration consists of six one-over-one sash units. All windows are detailed with stone lintels and sills.

The south or rear wall of the building is of the same randomly coursed construction and features a two story, wood frame porch with simple posts and balustrade. The first floor doorway is framed by paired double-hung window units; the second by single openings.

The east wall is contiguous with an adjacent one story building, and window openings are similar to those on the west elevation. The roof is a shallow gable and is obscured by the parapet wall.

Interior:

The ground floor of the Isaacson Building is divided into two bays by a series of square concrete posts supporting a central beam. The floor is of hardwood, and the walls are finished with plaster. Wood trim is original throughout. The most distinguishing feature of the first floor is the original pressed metal ceiling. Portions of the cornice are missing, but overall, it is in an excellent state of preservation.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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The second floor is divided into twelve rooms with two large rooms situated across the north end and ten additional smaller rooms off both sides of a central hallway. As on the first floor, the wood flooring, doors, trim, and wall plaster are all intact. The building also includes basement and attic spaces.

The Isaacson Building has not been altered since its construction in 1918. Despite a lack of maintenance, the structure retains a high level of physical integrity.

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
<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1918 **Builder/Architect** Genaro Acosta

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SUMMARY:

The Isaacson Building possesses architectural significance as an unaltered local example of early twentieth century commercial architecture. Also, the building possesses historic significance for its association with Isaac Isaacson, a Mormon pioneer and businessman.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The town of St. Johns is located on a section of the Little Colorado River Valley in northeastern Arizona at an elevation of nearly 6,000 feet. The area was long within the range of the native Apache tribe, but by the mid-1800's a predominantly Mexican population began to inhabit the valley. The dependable water supply and the availability of land for agriculture and grazing were conducive to the development of small self-sufficient farms and ranches.

By the early 1870's several small population centers existed and included, among others, El Tule, Las Tusas, El Vadito, and Plaza Nueva. El Vadito, the settlement which became present day St. Johns, is the only one still in existence, having been renamed San Juan, and later St. Johns.

Another major influence upon the area during this period was the emigration of Mormon settlers from Utah. Shortly after the Mormon's arrival in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, a carefully planned program of expansion and colonization was initiated. These efforts were intended to make as much territory as possible available to church members and, secondly, to secure a corridor south to Mexico to be used if religious oppression in Utah should begin to reach the level previously experienced in the East.

From the 1860's to the 1880's colonists were sent from Utah to Arizona to establish the Church along the Little Colorado River. Although some of these early settlements were abandoned due to poor soil and uncertain irrigation, fourteen communities were permanently established along the river and its tributaries. At El Vadito, Mormon colonists joined the existing population comprised mostly of Mexicans and a few Anglos.

Later emigrees to the valley were cattlemen who had entered into competition with farmers and shepherders for grazing land around St. Johns. During this period, ownership and control of the land shifted from farmers to small ranchers, and then to larger family or corporative operations.

Concurrent with this trend, regional settlement patterns gradually changed from a primarily rural orientation to an emphasis on the region's towns, and St. Johns, among others, became firmly established. St. Johns' importance was formalized in 1879 when it was designated as the county seat of the newly formed Apache County.

(See Continuation Sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name St. Johns North, Arizona

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	2	6	5	0	2	7	0	3	8	1	9	3	0	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

Block 53, Lots 2 and 3

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William Perreault, Historian/Registrar, and Roger Brevoort, Architectural Historian, with information provided by Valera Goesling, owner.

organization Arizona State Historic Preservation Office date June 1983

street & number 1688 West Adams telephone (602) 255-4174

city or town Phoenix state Arizona 85007

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 *Sandra Schoter*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 6-29-83

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

[Signature]
Keeper of the National Register

date 9-12-83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The community's modest growth during this period is embodied in the Barth Hotel (National Register 9/5/75), which was constructed by Jewish businessman, Sol Barth, in 1874. Growth peaked toward the end of World War I and is best evidenced by the construction of the Apache County Courthouse in 1918. Other buildings were erected along two blocks of St. Johns' Commercial Street by banking institutions, the Federal government, and local entrepreneurs. It was within this historic and economic context that the Isaacson Building was constructed.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The Isaacson Building is a locally significant resource primarily due to its architectural integrity. Constructed entirely of locally available materials in 1918 by local builder, Genaro Acosta, it stands today virtually unmodified.

Other remaining historic commercial buildings within this two block area include the Barth Hotel (National Register 9/5/75), an 1880 structure presently serving as a rock shop, an 1893 bank building, and an undated structure sited across from the Isaacson. The Barth Hotel is primarily residential in nature, and the remainder of the buildings have suffered to some degree from interior and/or exterior modifications. The Isaacson remains as St. Johns' only intact example of vernacular commercial architecture from the turn of the century.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE:

The Isaacson Building is historically significant for its association with Mormon pioneer and St. Johns businessman, Isaac Isaacson. Isaacson was born in Ephraim, Utah in 1859. In 1876, during the Mormon colonization of Arizona, he emigrated to Brigham City, a colony sited on the Little Colorado River north of present day Winslow.

While at Brigham City, he began his entrepreneurial pursuits, hauling lumber from the colony saw mill to other settlements, contracting to construct portions of the Atlantic-Pacific Railroad across northern Arizona, and cutting hay.

After Brigham City failed, he moved to an area north of St. Johns known as "The Meadows" and was married in 1882. While in this location, he constructed a dam and raised grain and alfalfa which he marketed at various locations in the region. He also raised cattle and became involved in the region's extensive cattle business.

At the turn of the century, he moved his family to St. Johns where he continued his business interests and branched into politics. He served as County Supervisor for six years, County Treasurer for two, and was Road Superintendent for several years.

In addition to stone quarrying and freighting, he began a saw mill business (at one time he had four saw mills in operation) which continued until his death in 1944.

During this period, he provided the stone and lumber for the construction of his building on Commercial Street. The local newspaper recorded the event: "Workmen have about finished the excavation work for the new building to be put up by Isaac Isaacson, Sr.,

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one of our local capitalists whose faith in the future of St. Johns remains fixed and firm. ... Mr. Isaacson is uncertain as to what this building will be used for when finished."

Later newspaper reports revealed that a restaurant was operated on the first floor, and the second floor rooms were furnished for renters.

In 1924 ownership was transferred to one of his twelve children, Natalia Greer, who operated the building as a hotel until ca. 1978. Ownership was transferred to her son, Gilbert Greer, II, and in 1980 to Valera Goesling, the present owner.

The Isaacson Building, constructed of materials cut and hauled by Isaac Isaacson, Sr., embodies the significance of his role in the historic development of St. Johns and Apache County, Arizona.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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