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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name McGee, James and Mary, House

other names/site number Pinal County Visitor Center

2. Location

street & number 330 East Butte Avenue

not for publication

city or town Florence

vicinity

state Arizona code AZ county Pinal code 021 zip code 85232

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 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.)

James W. Gowen ARIZONA STATE PARKS
Signature of certifying official

7 APRIL 2004
Date

ARIZONA STATE PARKS
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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- 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): _____

Linda McClelland 5/27/04

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4. National Park Service Certification
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I hereby certify that this property is:

- 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): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification
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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u> 1 </u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

LAW (law enforcement)
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT (public service)

Period of Significance

1910-1942

Significant Dates

1910 (construction of house)
1914 (death of James E. McGee)
1942 (death of Mary A. McGee)

Significant Person

McGee, James E.
McGee, Mary A.

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (*SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS 9-10*)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Bibliography (*SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS 11*)

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: Pinal County Visitor Center, 330 East Butte Avenue, Florence, AZ 85232

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 0.27

UTM References (See accompanying USGS map for point reference)
Zone 12 464260E 3654660N

Verbal Boundary Description

The property lies within Township 4 South, Range 9 East, Section 36, SW 1/4 (Gila & Salt River Meridian). The boundary of the nominated property is that of Tax Parcel #200-49-071, described as the W 1/2 of Block 209 and the north 60 ft adjacent to Block 209 of the Florence Townsite. The Florence Townsite plat was recorded with the Pinal County Recorder on March 13, 1885. The parcel contains approximately 11,563 square feet, or 0.27 acres.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property is the legally recorded boundary line for Tax Parcel #200-49-071, Pinal County, Arizona.

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title: **Pat Haigh Stein**
organization: **Arizona Preservation Consultants** date: **September 2003**
street/number: **6786 Mariah Drive** telephone: **(928) 714-0585**
city or town: **Flagstaff** state: **AZ** zip code: **86004**

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Additional Documentation

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Continuation Sheets (pages 6-12)

Maps

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property (Photos 1 and 2)

Other

N/A

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Property Owner

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name: **Pinal County (Board of Supervisors)**
street & number: **P.O. Box 827** telephone: **(520) 866-6211**
city or town: **Florence** state: **Arizona** zip code: **85232**

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National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 6 James and Mary McGee House
 Pinal County, Arizona

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DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The nominated property was constructed in 1910 as a residence for the James E. McGee family of Florence, Arizona Territory. The Colonial Revival-style building is a one-story, woodframe dwelling with a medium-pitched, hip roof. Character-defining elements include a wrap porch, clapboard siding, box cornices, and a pedimented roof vent with raked molding. The portion of the wrap porch on the east side of the house has been infilled. Despite the change, the house possesses good integrity. It retains much of its interior and exterior appearance from the period (1910-1942) when the McGees lived in it, and qualifies for the National Register under Criterion B.

Location and Setting

The property is located within the Town of Florence, Arizona, on Block 209 of the Florence Townsite. The town was founded in 1866 and became the seat of Pinal County when the county was created in 1875 (Nichols 1975). Florence lies approximately 60 mi southeast of the state capital of Phoenix and 70 mi north of Tucson.

The geographic setting is the alluvial plain of the middle Gila River Valley. The elevation is approximately 1500 ft above sea level. Annual rainfall normally varies from 10 to 12 inches. The climate of this Sonoran Desert locality is characterized by mild winters and hot summers, with daytime temperatures sometimes exceeding 105° F.

The house is sited at the northeast corner of Florence Street and Butte Avenue (State Route 287). The principal elevations face south onto Butte and west onto Florence. Setback from sidewalks along both streets is about 10 ft. North and west of the house are several county buildings. Directly east, on the same block, is a parking lot. To the south, beyond Butte Avenue, is the Douglas Addition, a subdivision dominated by early to mid twentieth century residences.

The grade of the house rests about two feet above the grade of the streets. Handicapped-accessible ramps, installed by Pinal County since 1996, lead to the front porch from the parking lot on the east, and from the sidewalk on the west. Two concrete steps provide access to the building from the sidewalk along Butte Avenue. The property is nicely xeriscaped with chamisa, ironwood, saltcedar, cholla, yucca, agave, prickly pear, barrel cactus, and a palm tree. The building is tidily maintained by its current owner, Pinal County, and functions as the Pinal County Visitor Center.

Description

The nominated property is a Colonial Revival-style cottage built in 1910 for the James E. McGee family. County records suggest that the McGees lived on the parcel beginning in 1893 (Pinal County nd). Local lore recalls that Mary McGee tired of living in the family's adobe house, and urged her husband to replace their earthen home with something more stylish. James obliged, building not only this house, but also an identical one on the land east of it, in 1910 and 1911, respectively (*Arizona Blade-Tribune*, 2/4/1911). The twin cottage was eventually demolished; its site is now the parking lot for the nominated property.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 7 James and Mary McGee House
Pinal County, Arizona

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The McGee cottage is a single-story, woodframe building with a concrete pier foundation. It has a medium-pitched, hip roof with rolled roofing. The roofing is peeling away at the eaves, revealing the presence of a lower layer of scalloped composition shingles. Character-defining elements include box cornices; 7-inch-wide clapboard siding; both single and coupled wooden-sash, double-hung, one-over-one windows; transomed doors; and a pedimented roof vent with raked molding. The west elevation still has its original 3-panel wooden door with one large light and stamped-metal hardware. The south (main) door has been replaced with a steel panel door having a fanlight.

A porch wraps around the west and south sides of the building. It measures 7.5 ft deep, with 4 by 4-inch support posts and a concrete deck. Like most Florence homes of the period (Sobin 1977; Wells and Urbas 1985), the porch has no balustrade. The porch originally also wrapped around the east side of the building, but that portion was infilled circa 1950 to create more interior floor space. The infilled portion is of woodframe construction with board-and-batten siding (painted to match the rest of the house), and a string of fixed-pane, large-light windows. The windows are covered with trellises that block the morning sun.

Originally the kitchen/pantry at the rear of the house was screened rather than fully enclosed. That arrangement provided maximum ventilation and prevented heat build-up during the summer months. As the result of a kitchen fire in 1932, the room was remodeled (*Arizona Blade-Tribune*, 1/29/1932). It was fully enclosed with woodframe walls, and given clapboard siding matching that of the rest of the house. During the remodeling, the kitchen also received four-over-one, double-hung, wooden-sash windows.

The interior originally consisted of four rooms plus the semi-enclosed kitchen/pantry at the rear. The original four rooms remain largely intact. Character-defining elements include five-panel doors with transoms, 10-ft high tongue-and-groove ceilings, crown molding, and milled baseboards. The two western rooms are connected by a large portal. Flooring in three of the rooms is now of modern vinyl tile. The fourth room, originally a bedroom but now an office, still shows its original pine (or fir) flooring, stained in imitation of rosewood (*Arizona Blade-Tribune*, 2/4/1911). The kitchen/pantry at the rear has pine (or fir) flooring, an 8-ft tongue-and-groove ceiling, and wooden cabinets dating from the early 1930s. The infilled porch along the east side of the building is sheet-rocked and has a 7-ft ceiling.

The south and north elevations each have one air-conditioning unit. Each unit has been installed by raising the lower half of a double-hung window and inserting the device directly in the opening. The windows have not been modified to accommodate the air-conditioners, which are easily removable.

Integrity

The main alteration to the McGee House has consisted of the east porch infill. The alteration has not impacted the principal elevations, which face south onto Butte Avenue and west onto Florence Street. The alteration has been made even less obtrusive by covering its modern windows with trellises and by painting its wooden siding to match the rest of the house. The handicapped-accessible ramps at the south end of the building have minimal yet sturdy steel railings that do not detract from the historic appearance of the building. The air-conditioning units have been properly installed by

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 8 James and Mary McGee House
Pinal County, Arizona

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raising the lower halves of double-hung windows rather than by removing or changing any part of the windows. The house today looks much as it did when the McGees lived in it. The property retains sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to qualify for the National Register under Criterion B.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 9 James and Mary McGee House
Pinal County, Arizona

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SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The nominated property is significant under Criterion B as the best surviving property associated with the productive lives of James E. McGee (1870-1914) and his wife, Mary A. McGee (1877-1942). James McGee was a former Deputy Sheriff and Arizona Ranger who served as Pinal County Sheriff from 1906 to 1914. He was regarded as a courageous officer and sharpshooter who helped bring law and order to Pinal County and southern Arizona. Following the untimely death of her husband in 1914, Mary McGee supported and raised their two daughters by working variously as the County Recorder and as Florence Postmaster. The period of significance begins in 1910 with the construction of the house for the McGees, and ends in 1942 with the death of its surviving owner-occupant, Mary McGee. The level of significance is local.

Context: Association with James E. McGee, Sheriff of Pinal County, and Mary A. McGee, County Recorder and Florence Postmaster

The nominated property is significant as the best surviving property associated with the productive lives of James E. and Mary A. McGee. James was born on January 2, 1870, in Crawford County, Arkansas, the son of Benjamin F. and Margaret Button McGee. When James was five years old, the family set out in a prairie schooner for the gold fields of California. The trip took over a year. Upon reaching the Golden State, Benjamin McGee found that he could earn more by farming than by mining, and settled in Tulare County. James received an education in the public schools, but developed a special aptitude for outdoor skills such as tracking and sharpshooting (Connors 1913).

James McGee left California for Yuma County, Arizona Territory, at the age of 23. Entering the field of law enforcement, he quickly proved his competence by apprehending a train robber. McGee brought the prisoner to Florence, in Pinal County, A.T., where the Federal District Court was located. Two weeks later he was offered the position of Deputy Sheriff by Pinal County Sheriff Lemuel K. Drais. Thus, in 1893, McGee became a resident of Florence (Connors 1913).

McGee soon met, courted, and married Mary Alice Harris. Born in Florence in 1877, Mary was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Harris. James and Mary would eventually have two daughters, Mildred and Florence (*Arizona Blade-Tribune*, 12/18/1942).

James continued as Deputy Sheriff until 1904, when he joined the Arizona Rangers. Formed in 1901 during the term of Governor Nathan Oakes Murphy, the Rangers were a mounted company of lawmen whose mission was to prevent cattle rustling and to rid the Territory of fugitives who sought refuge there. To qualify for the Rangers, applicants had to be good riders, ropers, shooters, and trackers. James McGee fit the job description well. He soon rose to the rank of sergeant under the command of Captain Thomas Rynning (Connors 1913; Wagoner 1970).

In 1906 McGee resigned his Ranger position and was elected Sheriff of Pinal County (Connors 1913). With little fanfare, he ably tended to the duties of the position, apprehending suspects and keeping the peace throughout the 3.4 million

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Pinal County, Arizona

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acre county. He participated in the social life of the community by joining local chapters of fraternal orders including the Masons, Elks, Moose, and Mystic Circle (*Arizona Blade-Tribune*, 4/25/1914:1).

Mary McGee was active in local groups such as the Catholic Church, the Women's Benefit Association, and the Florence Women's Club. Local lore maintains that she did not enjoy living in an adobe home--the norm for Florence at the time--and so urged her husband to build a more refined and stylish dwelling. Whatever the reason, the McGees in 1910 replaced their original home with the handsome Colonial Revival-style, woodframe house that is the subject of this nomination. The following year, they built a nearly identical dwelling on an adjacent lot. The local newspaper described the twin cottages as models "of neatness and convenience" (*Arizona Blade-Tribune*, 2/4/1911:4).

In 1911, a local cattleman named Charles M. Foreman fought a hard campaign against Sheriff McGee and won the election. However, Foreman caught pneumonia while campaigning, and died before taking office in 1912. McGee continued in the office of Sheriff (White 1995).

In the spring of 1914, Sheriff McGee was tending to law-enforcement matters at the mining town of Ray and at the Carney Mine when he became ill with acute abdominal pains. His condition quickly worsened; his wife and brother were summoned. He died on April 20, 1914, while enroute to the hospital (*Arizona Blade-Tribune*, 4/25/1914).

His widow was left with two children and no visible means of support. The twin cottage on the adjacent lot, occupied by James' brother and parents, generated little income. To sustain her family, Mary found it necessary to work outside the home. Career women were then a rarity in Florence; women in the work force were most often teachers or nurses. Mary broke with tradition by pursuing a career in public service. She successfully ran for Pinal County Recorder and served two terms. She then served as Florence Postmaster from 1926 to 1936. Rather unintentionally, Mary McGee became a role model for later Florence women who sought careers in non-traditional roles. She lived to see her daughters marry into prominent families, the LeBarrons of Flagstaff and Phoenix, and the Reids of Mexico City. Mary McGee lived in the family home on Butte Avenue for the rest of her life. She died on December 14, 1942, at the age of 64 (*Arizona Blade-Tribune*, 6/28/1929 and 12/18/1942).

After Mary's death, the house became the property of Mercy and Robert Johnson of Florence. The Johnsons, in turn, sold the building to Pinal County in 1996 (Pinal County nd). Still owned by the county, the property is currently used as the Pinal County Visitor Center.

The nominated property is eligible for the National Register under Criterion B for its association with James E. and Mary A. McGee. James played an important role in local law enforcement, while Mary, as a public servant, contributed to the field of politics/government. The adobe home where they resided early in their marriage (on the same site) has not survived. The twin cottage that they built in 1911 next to their own 1910 home was razed some years ago. The Second Pinal County Courthouse, where both James and Mary conducted some of their work, still stands and is listed on the National Register, but does not have a specific association with either of the McGees. Historic resource surveys of Florence (Sobin 1977; Wells and Urbas 1985) have failed to reveal other properties tied to James or Mary. The nominated house appears to be the best surviving property associated with the productive lives of these two locally-prominent individuals.

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Section 9 Page 11 James E. and Mary A. McGee House
Pinal County, Arizona

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arizona Blade-Tribune (Florence)

var Newspaper articles concerning the McGees dated 2/4/1911, 4/25/1914, 6/28/1929, 1/29/1932, 3/4/1932, and 12/18/1942. Microfilm copies on file, Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records, Phoenix.

Connors, Jo (compiler)

1913 *Who's Who in Arizona*. J. Connors, Tucson.

Nichols, Roger L.

1975 "A Miniature Venice: Florence, Arizona, 1866-1910." *Journal of Arizona History*, Winter, Vol. 16(4).

Pinal County

nd Property Record Card and Alpha Card, Tax Parcel #200-49-071. County Assessor's Office, Florence, AZ.

Sobin, Harris J.

1977 *Florence Townsite A.T.: Final Report of Florence Townsite Historic District Study*. Harris Sobin & Associates, Tucson, AZ.

Wagoner, Jay J.

1970 *Early Arizona: Prehistory to Civil War*. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson, AZ.

Wells, Reba N., and Andrea Urbas

1985 Florence Multiple Resource Area: National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form. Copy on file, State Historic Preservation Office, Arizona State Parks, Phoenix, AZ.

White, Violet

1995 Letter dated 10/26/1995 from Violet White to Reverend Bryan Sherry, Church of the Assumption, Florence. Copy on file, Pinal County Historical Society Museum, Florence, AZ.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photos Page 12 James and Mary McGee House
Pinal County, Arizona

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Photographic Information

1. James and Mary McGee House
2. Pinal County, AZ
3. Pat H. Stein
4. 2003
5. State Historic Preservation Office, Arizona State Parks, 1300 W. Washington St., Phoenix, AZ 85007
6. View northeast, showing the McGee House
7. Photo 1

1. James and Mary McGee House
2. Pinal County, AZ
3. Pat H. Stein
4. 2003
5. State Historic Preservation Office, Arizona State Parks, 1300 W. Washington St., Phoenix, AZ 85007
6. View north, showing the McGee House
7. Photo 2

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 04000487

Property Name: McGee, James and Mary, House

County: Pinal State: Arizona

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Linda M. Clelland

May 27, 2004

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 3: State Certification

The block indicating the SHPO's certification that "the property meets the National Register Criteria" is hereby marked.

The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

****+ Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**