

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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REGISTER

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RESUBMISSION

Woman's Club (Safford MRA)
Graham County
ARIZONA

The Woman's Club was returned for substantive reasons relating to applicable criteria and areas of significance. The National Register reviewer noted that this building appears to be eligible under criterion "c." The Woman's Club was nominated under criterion "a" only.

The main reason this property was returned was because the incorrect significance area was indicated on the form. The property was nominated for its associational significance (under criterion "a") with the area of "exploration and settlement." Since this property is more importantly associated with the role social groups played in Safford, it should have been nominated under the significance area of "social history." All of the evidence used to support the criterion "a" claim relates to the importance of the Woman's Club as a social organization in Safford; thus the resource does not clearly convey the criterion "a" significance of the Woman's Club. In addition, the Register reviewer felt that the association of the Woman's Club with Safford history was not clearly delineated, as most of the events referenced in the nomination occurred before the building was constructed. While significance under criterion "c" was not advanced in the nomination for the Woman's Club, the building also has significance for its association with master architect M. H. Starkweather and because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Bungalow type in Safford.

The Woman's Club is clearly eligible under criterion "c" based on its architectural significance as the embodiment of the Bungalow type in Safford and as an example of the work of master architect M.H. Starkweather. It is also eligible under criterion "a" for its association with a social group in Safford under the significance area of "social history." It is the decision of the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer to:

- (1) Delete significance under the area of exploration/settlement and nominate the property under criterion "a" for its social history significance.
- (2) Clarify Woman's Club activities which directly connect the Club's social history significance with the nominated resource.
- (2) Nominate the property under criterion "c" as well and emphasize the building's architectural attributes.

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The Safford Woman's Club is significant to Safford social history because it is the one and only building constructed by the Club to house its community activities. It is the one building in Safford most directly associated with the Safford Woman's Club. The Safford Multiple Resource Area nomination (item 8, page 12) describes the early history of the group. The Club building at 215 Main was constructed to house the activities that previously had been held in members' homes and rented meeting halls. Because of the inadequacies of the available meeting locations (including noise and access), the idea of a clubhouse was conceived.

The Safford Woman's Club possesses historical significance as an embodiment of the role of the Woman's Club in the social and cultural developments in Safford during the early years of the community. The main goal of the Club was the betterment of the community. The work of the Club was divided into four primary functions, following the pattern set by other Woman's Clubs throughout the country. These functions were literary, educational, current events, and social. School improvement projects were a mainstay of the Club. Social and educational affairs sponsored by the Club soon became the center of social life in the small rural town of Safford. Elaborate teas were frequently held in the building, as well as the presentation of papers on topics of current interest. As the town grew, the Club building saw increasing activity. Card clubs, costume parties, dancing classes, Spanish classes, musicals, bazaars, and public dances were held in the building.

These varied functions, responding to local and even national needs, have continued until the present day as fundamental components of the Safford Woman's Club. Throughout its existence, the Club has promoted the cultural, intellectual, moral, and social life of Safford. As the only structure in Safford serving in this capacity, it provides evidence of the historic role women played in our nation's 48th state.

Architectural Significance (criterion "c")

The Safford Woman's Club is the embodiment of the Bungalow style in Safford. It also possesses Period Revival style influences. Built of cut stone laid in an ashlar pattern, the building is the work of master architect M. H. Starkweather of Tucson. The building is considered to have architectural significance at the local level for its representation of a late Bungalow style and as a work of a master. Accordingly, it is nominated under criterion "c."

Merritt Howard Starkweather was born in Chicago on November 10, 1891, and grew up in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Starkweather settled in Tucson in 1915 and went to work for William Bray, a local pioneer architect and one of the first national AIA organizers. Bray is noteworthy in Safford for having designed the Oddfellows Home. Starkweather eventually went into business for himself, and opened the Tucson Blueprint Company in 1917.

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Starkweather was one of the original founders of the Arizona Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. He was named a fellow in 1968 for his public service. Starkweather was responsible for the design of several public schools in Tucson: the Arizona Inn, the American Legion Club, and sixteen homes in Tucson's El Encanto Estates subdivision. He also designed the Elk's Lodge in Nogales and the Casa Grande Hospital, in addition to the Safford Woman's Club. He is considered one of Arizona's outstanding architects of the twentieth century. The Woman's Club is the only building in Safford designed by this master architect and therefore has significance to the architectural history of the community.

I concur with the statements as presented in this resubmission.

Shereen Lerner 3/23/88
Shereen Lerner, Ph.D. Date
State Historic Preservation Officer