

3056

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NOV 28 1988

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home
other names/site number The Charles A. Mitten Home

2. Location

street & number 22 East First Avenue not for publication
city, town Mesa vicinity
state Arizona code AZ county Maricopa code 013 zip code 85210

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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. See continuation sheet.

Shereen Server 11/22/88
Signature of certifying official Date
State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

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): _____

Sharon Byer 12/29/88
Entered in the National Register
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC - single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC - single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Late Bungalow/Other

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Plastered Celotex on woodframe
roof Copper on wooden trusses
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY

The Mesa Journal-Tribune Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Demonstration Home is a modestly designed one-story residence built in 1936 by the local newspaper with an FHA-approved loan. Equipped with all the modern conveniences and materials of its day (such as central air-conditioning and heating, copper water pipes, custom built-in cabinets, a copper roof, and an attached garage), the house was constructed to encourage the people of Mesa to use FHA-backed loans to build new housing. The house is located at 22 East First Avenue, approximately one quarter-mile southeast of the Mesa City Hall. The building retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association from its date of construction and is in excellent condition.

DESCRIPTION

Site: The Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home is located in the original square mile of Mesa bounded by South Country Club Drive, South Mesa Drive, East University, and East Broadway. The site (a portion of Lots 3 and 4 of Block 10) was part of a 160-acre parcel homesteaded by Frances Martin Pomeroy, one of the original four Mormon founders of Mesa (founded 1878). The site remained in Pomeroy family ownership until it was sold to Charles and Florence Mitten, the former a publisher of the Mesa Journal-Tribune. The FHA demonstration home was the first and only building to be constructed on this site. The home is surrounded by other late 1930s and 1940s single-family residences on a block zoned for redevelopment. Mexican fan palms dot the streetscape; fruit trees, flowers, and Italian cypress provide landscaping for individual houses along the block.

Construction and Design: The house is of woodframe construction built on a poured concrete foundation, making the floor approximately one foot above grade. Designed by J. O. Stradling, a Mesa builder and cabinetmaker, the single-story house is reminiscent both of a bungalow and a Spanish Colonial Revival style home in terms of its massing, roof line, surface finish, fenestration, and porch, yet lacks the architectural details that would place it squarely within either of these traditions.

Exterior: Interior and exterior walls consist of plastered and painted Celotex. The roof has a low-pitched, compound gable roof oriented perpendicular to the axis of the street. A circular vent under the main gable of the house lends distinction to the roofline and is mirrored in an

See continuation sheet

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identical vent under a smaller, front gable above the living room. An eave of the latter projects eastward to form the roof of the entryway porch. A garage attached to the house at its eastern side also has a low-pitched, gable roof. The roof of the house and garage is of copper and has needed no repairs since its construction in 1936. The Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Home was the first building in Mesa to have a copper roof.

The windows consist of three-over-one wooden sash windows on the main (south) elevation and steel casement windows on the north, east, and west elevations. The two bedrooms each have corner steel-casement windows. In the more temperate months when windows can be opened, screens are attached to the exteriors of the sash windows and to the interiors of the casement windows.

Outside doors number three, all original: one enters the living room from the small entry porch, one leads from the service porch to the kitchen, and the third leads from the service porch into the east side of the house. All doors are original, but screens are now affixed to their exteriors so that doors can be left open in cooler months.

Interior: The Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home has a living room (17'3" by 14') with dining alcove (5'4" by 10'), a kitchen (9'7" by 16'4"), west bedroom (9'8" by 18'), east bedroom (11' by 16'), bathroom (5' by 10'), and a central air conditioning room (6'11" by 4'). All rooms open onto a central hallway. The attached garage is now a family room.

The floors in the living-dining area, the hallway, and the bedrooms are of hardwood over plywood sub-flooring. All except one bedroom floor have been covered with carpeting. The kitchen and bathroom floors are of soft wood that was originally covered with "battleship" (extra heavy-duty) linoleum but is now covered with vinyl sheeting.

The three original types of plaster finish on interior walls remain: kitchen and bathroom walls are plastered smooth and have enamel paint; bedrooms walls have a sand-textured plaster finish; the living-dining area and hall have a textured plaster finish.

The living/dining room has a 9 ft coved ceiling, dropping to 8 ft in the dining alcove. The two bedrooms, kitchen, and bath have 8 ft uncovered ceilings. In the hall, the ceiling drops to 6'8" to allow air conditioning ducts to cross the hall from the air conditioning room to the east bedroom, bath, and kitchen. Ducts to the living-dining area and to the west bedroom go directly through the walls.

This was the first house in Mesa to have air-conditioning. The heater (a Pacific Gas Radiator Company Automatic Gas-Fired Furnace) and the air conditioner (a Frick refrigeration unit) were originally housed in a small brick basement in the center of the house. After 46 years of service, the Pacific unit was replaced in October 1983; the Frick unit had been replaced a few years prior. To keep Mrs. Mitten from having to go downstairs, the serviceman installed the new units on the main floor in the stairwell leading to the basement. The ducts which carry air

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from the heating-cooling units to the rest of the house are original.

The 1936 home had many amenities which have survived to the present. There is a wall receptacle representing the bygone era when milk bottles were delivered to the house. The receptacle has two small doors, one outside and the other inside the kitchen, for easy bottle exchange between milkman and housewife. Copper water pipes throughout the house are original and still function well. Crane-brand bathroom fixtures as well as the original kitchen cabinets are still in use. The kitchen cabinets contain grain bins which are lined with metal sheeting. Glass or engraved brass door knobs and engraved brass escutcheons are on each interior door. Many of the light fixtures, including fluorescent tubes with chrome holders in the bedrooms and bath, are original and in working order. The house has never needed to be rewired and, for its day, had an exceptional number of wall outlets: 4 in each bedroom, 6 in the living-dining area, 7 in the kitchen, and 2 in the service porch. The west bedroom features a built-in clothes hamper on casters; a clothes chute to the hamper connects with the bathroom. The closet of each bedroom is equipped with a tiny steel casement window to ventilate the storage as necessary. Separate built-ins in the kitchen provided special space for Mrs. Mitten's iron and her ironing-board. The 1936 Mesa house was modern, convenient, attractive, and affordable.

Alterations: Five minor alterations have been made to the house since the historic period:

1. The garage was converted to a family room. The exterior was not changed: however, the garage door was fastened shut. The four windows on the garage door are original. The interior of the room was paneled, it was given a ceiling, and its concrete floor was covered with vinyl.
2. The heating and cooling units were relocated from the basement to the main floor.
3. A small, horizontal roof was added over the service porch, immediately to the east of the main entryway porch.
4. Two covered carports were added to the south (main) elevation, a patio roof was added to the east side of the rear elevation, a small roof for storage of yard furniture was added at the rear, and a shade was installed over the front window. All are aluminum and easily removable.
5. A wooden and wire fence enclosing the front yard was removed.

INTEGRITY

The main changes which have occurred have been the conversion of the garage to a family room and the addition of the front window shade and carports. These changes are unobtrusive and have a minimal impact on the appearance of the house. The lines of the window shade and

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carports are like those of the original house. Perhaps the most striking change in the appearance of the house since 1936 has resulted from the growth of its surrounding vegetation, marking the transformation of the "Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home" to the more personal "Mitten Home." A thriving citrus tree now obscures part of the garage and its attached carport. An Italian cyprus, merely a shrub when the house was built in 1936, now projects over its roof. Mulberry trees to the west rear and a Phoenix date palm to the east rear complete the setting of the house. The house has been well maintained throughout its history and is in excellent condition.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT: FHA
COMMERCE: Charles A. Mitten, publisher
and Civic Leader

Period of Significance
1936-1938
1936-1938

Significant Dates
1936

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person
Mitten, Charles A.

Architect/Builder
Stradling, J. O.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY

The 1936 Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home is significant under Criterion A because it was the first home in Mesa to be financed by a Federal Housing Administration secured loan. The Mesa Journal-Tribune sponsored the construction of the home to promote the FHA and to prove to Mesa citizens what \$50 per month could provide in home ownership. The project did, in fact, result in a boom of FHA-sponsored construction in Mesa in the late 1930s. Editorial columns which appeared in the newspaper and advertisements placed in the paper by contractors who were constructing the home provide an unusually detailed chronicle of its construction, evidencing the prominent materials of the day.

The property is also significant under Criterion B as the residence most closely associated with the productive life of Charles A. Mitten, a Mesa newspaperman and civic leader. Mitten was publisher of the Mesa Journal-Tribune and negotiated the FHA loan which financed the construction of the house. The home remained in Mitten's ownership and was his primary place of residence until his death in 1981 at the age of 82. During the historic period (through 1938) Mitten co-published the Chandler Arizonan and the Mesa Journal-Tribune, and led a successful fundraising effort to build the Southside District Hospital. He is also notable as the developer, printer, and distributor of "Mesamoney", a local scrip used to counter the effects of the Great Depression.

HISTORIC CONTEXT A: Association with the Development of the Federal Housing Administration Program in Mesa, 1936-1938

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) is a program of the federal government that insures private loans for new housing and home repairs. The program was created by the National Housing Act of July 27, 1934 in response to three problems which resulted from the Great Depression: (1) America's housing stock was declining as buildings were falling

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into disrepair; (2) the unemployment rate was high in the building trades and allied occupations, with plants idle or running only part time in virtually all of the heavy industries; and (3) normal channels of credit needed reopening to stimulate a revival of repair work and new building after several years of lowered activity.

The goal of the Federal Housing Administration was to cooperate with private industry to make better housing available to the American people. The Act of 1934 had three provisions, known as Titles I, II, and III:

- Title I encouraged the immediate modernization, repair, and improvement of homes by providing that any advances of credit or lands made for this purpose be insured by the FHA against losses up to 20 percent of the total amount of such advances made by any bank or other approved financial institution. Loans were to be based primarily on the individual property owner's character and ability to repay;
- Title II provided that mortgages, in order to be eligible for insurance, had to conform to certain conditions designed to protect borrowers against excessive charges and to discourage the assumption of obligations above the borrower's reasonable capacity to pay; it also provided for complete retirement of the mortgage by means of small amortization payments at frequent intervals;
- Title III authorized the establishment of national mortgage associations; organized with private capital, these associations were to aid in the flow of capital from areas with surplus funds seeking safe, long-term investment to areas where such funds were not adequate to meet local home financing needs.

The FHA embarked on an aggressive campaign to encourage prospective home owners to take advantage of its program. The FHA sometimes referred to itself as "the easy loan program" and described its offerings as "manna from heaven." Press releases from 1935 stressed that up to \$2,000 was available to each homeowner for repairs "to bring homes up to the standard of the time" and up to \$16,000 was available to builders of new homes. Persons of good character (defined as having a means of livelihood and being able to meet payments) were encouraged to apply. Those wishing to build new homes needed to have 20 percent of the value of the finished project in order to borrow the remaining 80 percent. Homeowners who wished to refinance present mortgages could also borrow up to 60 percent of the appraised value of their homes. All FHA-backed mortgages were to be paid off in 20 years or less. To further entice people to take out mortgages, the FHA built, with much fanfare and publicity, demonstration homes in various communities. Demonstration homes were modest but attractive, and fitted with all the modern conveniences.

In Arizona, response to the FHA was surprisingly strong. By June, 1935 Arizona, the nation's youngest state, led the nation in its quota of modernization and repair FHA loans and ranked sixteenth in its quota of new construction loans. So far in the lead was Arizona that its quota of modernization and repair loans was at least double those of all but six states. By June 15, 1935, nearly every city and town in Arizona had broken ground for an FHA home.

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The success of the Arizona FHA program depended in part on its aggressive advertising. The state FHA office saturated the press with articles about its loan program. In cooperation with the state office, local papers ran Better Housing Sections which described the federal program and benefits to be gained from it. In early summer of 1935, the state FHA office calculated that 80 percent of all advertising in Arizona newspapers was directly attributable to the National Housing Act.

For reasons that are not clear, and to the consternation of state FHA director Thomas Elliott, response to the federal program lagged in the small (population 3500) farming community of Mesa. Several homeowners secured modernization and repair loans but, by spring of 1935, no one had secured an FHA-backed loan for new housing. Aided by the Mesa Journal-Tribune, the state office promptly stepped up its campaign to publicize its program. Front page articles and editorials carried headlines such as "New Opportunity for Mesa to Profit under Housing Act," "Credit through F.H.A. Loans," "FHA Program Aids Arizona," and "A Golden Opportunity," and made promises of "no red tape." Mesa Mayor J. G. Peterson responded on June 28, 1935 by launching a Better Housing Program to encourage the public to build with FHA -backed loans. Spurred by both local government and press, Mesa's citizens still refused to take the bait. In the summer of 1935, the Mesa Journal-Tribune announced that Mesa would soon see a "Herman Winter demonstration [FHA] home," but the house was never built.

It was not until August of 1936 that plans for an FHA demonstration home in Mesa were finalized. The project was set up in the following manner, which demonstrates how a typical demonstration home worked. The newspaper would sponsor the house, which would be known as the "Mesa Journal-Tribune Federal Housing Administration Demonstration Home." The Valley National Bank would carry the mortgage, and construction would be done using mostly local contractors. The building would be open to visitors during its construction, and would feature a special three-day open house upon completion. A sign would be prominently displayed on the property to announce its backing by the FHA. For the purpose of securing the loan, newspaper publisher Charles A. Mitten and his wife, Florence K. Mitten, agreed to sign the mortgage for the transaction. The house would be built on part of two lots which the Mittens had purchased from Clara Pomeroy in June of 1936. The land was part of the old, 10-acre Pomeroy homestead, but no previous construction had occurred on the site.

One newspaper article indicates that the Mittens did not intend to buy the completed house when they signed their names to the mortgage. Their plan and that of the newspaper was to sell the home when completed:

Plans for the disposition of the house are not complete, but should it not be sold some member of the Journal-Tribune staff will probably occupy it at the end of the public inspection period....

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It is the belief of the publishers of the Mesa Journal-Tribune that Mesa needs more homes and if those who rent could learn just what can be done with rent money they would soon be in a home of their own (Mesa Journal-Tribune, September 4, 1936, page 1, columns 3-4).

However, according to Florence Mitten, she and her husband intended to move into the house from the time they signed their names to the mortgage. They took an active role in construction of the house, selecting many custom features to make their future home more comfortable and livable. The home was completed by Christmas of 1936 and was the scene of an open house in mid January, 1937. The Mittens moved into the building in early 1937.

It was a good house, solidly-built, copper-roofed, and air-conditioned. It was also convenient and practical, with a step-saver kitchen, a garage built on the front for easy access rather than on the side or rear, a thermostat-controlled heating and cooling unit to "maintain a temperature of not less than 75 degrees in winter, and not more than 80 degrees in summer," and a roof carrying "an unconditional guarantee of satisfaction." It cost approximately \$5,000 to build and furnish and carried a 20-year mortgage with payments of \$50 per month.

Construction of the Mesa Journal-Tribune house provided employment for many individuals, most of them from Mesa. Articles and advertisements in the newspaper provide a detailed account of the many contractors, suppliers, and products involved:

- Plans drawn by: J. O. Stradling, Mesa
- General contractor: Calvin Ault, Mesa
- Roofing: Copper Roofs of Arizona, Inc., Phoenix
- General building materials: O'Malley Lumber Company, Mesa
- Sashes, doors, sash windows, steel casement windows, and mill work: F. P. Drew and Sons Lumber Company, Mesa
- Plumbing: O. S. Stapley Company, Mesa, using Crane fixtures
- Painting: Fred T. Ash, Mesa, using Sherwin-Williams paints
- Plastering: Wallace Bond, Mesa
- Heating and cooling: W. F. Gollaher, Mesa, using a Pacific Gas Radiator Company Automatic Gas-Fired Furnace and a Frick refrigeration unit purchased from Bell and Coerver (Phoenix)
- Electrical: Sutton Electric Company, Mesa
- Cabinets: J. O. Stradling, Mesa
- Interior Furnishings: Paul L. Sale and Company, Mesa
- Landscaping: W. P. Hawes, Mesa
- Appliances: North Brothers Hardware Company, Mesa, using Norge range, washer, and refrigerator

The demonstration project stimulated the construction of other FHA-backed homes in Mesa. As the demonstration home was being completed, the Millet and Clark homes were being

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started on Clark Street, while John Jensen and Ernest Huber were building their FHA homes in other parts of the city. Figures released by the Mesa city clerk in January, 1937, indicated that applications for permits to build in Mesa during 1936 came within a few thousand dollars of doubling the dollar value represented by permits filed in 1935. Whereas 29 jobs were undertaken during 1935, 47 were begun in 1936, excluding figures from public construction projects (schools, comfort stations, and so forth). In January of 1937 the Mesa branch of the Valley National Bank reported that loans made by the bank for construction of new homes and home modernization had reached a new high of \$353,143. The city clerk attributed the building boom to the Federal Housing administration plan of long-term financing by private institutions such as the Valley National Bank.

Like other demonstration homes, the Mesa Journal-Tribune/FHA experiment proved successful in introducing the concept of FHA-backed financing into this central Arizona community. The Mesa example represents, in microcosm, a process that was taking place across the United States and that revolutionized the housing industry. The average middle-class family could now afford a home formerly beyond its reach. The channels of communication between those with money to lend and those needing money to borrow were reopened. Owing in part to the FHA but also largely to other New Deal programs, the construction trades and allied occupations were revitalized. At the end of its first year of operation, the FHA estimated that, nationally, 750,000 persons had been given employment as a direct result of its program. For the same period, the FHA documented that building permits for repairs and modernization in approximately 760 cities showed a 29.6 percent increase over the previous year.

The period of significance (1936 through 1938) dates from the date of construction of the house in 1936 through the end of the historic period.

HISTORIC CONTEXT B: Association with Charles A. Mitten, Newspaper Publisher and Civic Leader

The Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home was the residence most closely associated with the productive life of Charles A. Mitten. Mitten and his family were the first and only persons to live in the house. Mitten became associated with the house at the start of its construction in 1936. The house was Mitten's residence from early 1937 until his death in 1981.

Charles A. Mitten (1899-1981) was born in Oakley, Kansas. His father, P. R. Mitten, was a newspaperman who came West because his wife had tuberculosis. Following her death, P. R. Mitten worked assorted jobs until, by 1912, he had enough money to establish the Buckeye Valley News, a weekly journal in an agricultural community west of Phoenix. Young "Charley" Mitten learned all aspects of the newspaper business from his dad while attending Phoenix Union High School. After graduating in 1918, Charley enlisted in the Marines and served in the Philippines during World War I.

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Discharged in 1920, Charles Mitten rejoined his father and worked with the elder Mitten on various newspaper ventures until the latter's death in 1947. In 1922 the Mittens discontinued the Buckeye Valley News and purchased the Chandler Arizonan, another weekly newspaper.

Charles Mitten began to take a leadership role in civic affairs while in his early thirties. During his years in Chandler (1922 to 1932) he served as director and president of the Chandler Chamber of Commerce, noble grand of the Odd Fellows, and master of the Masonic Lodge.

In 1927, Charles Mitten married Florence Knox. Two years later, using some of the privileges afforded veterans, Mitten filed for and received a homestead patent for a quarter-section of land east of Mesa. The Mittens resided on the homestead for approximately one year, to satisfy residency requirements of the Homestead Act as amended. From 1929 through 1936, the publisher and his wife moved several times between the communities of Chandler and Mesa.

In 1932 the Mittens learned that the Mesa Journal-Tribune was for sale and, with John C. McPhee, Fred Jahn, and V. W. Leyda, purchased the weekly newspaper. During the next nine years Charles gradually bought out the others' interests until, by 1941, he had become its full owner. In 1932 he helped organize the Arizona Newspaper Association and was elected its first president.

Publishing a newspaper during the Depression tested Mitten's mettle and further proved his leadership abilities. When the First National Bank and the Bank of Chandler closed their doors in 1932, the businessmen of Mesa were without money for three weeks until Mitten and his Journal-Tribune associates devised a clever scheme. They printed \$1,000 worth of "Mesamoney," met their payroll with it, and convinced local merchants to accept it as scrip. The "money" was redeemable at the Journal-Tribune in advertising, printing, subscriptions, or cash at the end of six months. Soon there was a demand for more Mesamoney and Mitten and his staff printed more. Decades later, Mitten tried to find some of the scrip to add to his scrapbook, but found none: all, it seemed, had been successfully redeemed for cash or services.

During the Depression, Mitten developed several promotional events to amuse his fellow Mesans and to bring outsiders into town to spend money. Probably the most flamboyant of Mitten's productions was the time the Journal-Tribune hired a motorcyclist to crash a flaming board wall erected between a bank and a drug store. The rider revved in front of the Journal-Tribune office, sped between the parted crowds, hit the fiery wall, and safely crashed through. Another Journal-Tribune caper was the weekly "Chicken Day," when the newspaper accepted chickens as payment for subscriptions. Soon the paper was overwhelmed with fowls in crates. They were placed on a large flat-bed truck, which started from Maricopa Inn at Center and Main and headed west. Every 200 or 300 feet,

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live chickens were tossed to the crowd. "We certainly found out in a hurry who the hungry people in Mesa were," Charley recalled. Many were the stunts that Mitten resorted to during the Depression, but his newspaper stayed in business and gained subscribers.

One of Mitten's greatest accomplishments during the 1930s was the building of a community hospital and an addition to it. As president of the Southside District Hospital, Mitten signed his name in 1932 to \$10,000 worth of 4 percent bonds, payable in cash or services in 10 years. In 1938 he again put his name to a loan of some \$150,000 to build a surgical addition to the hospital. During the 34 years Mitten served on the hospital board all bonds were paid off and no drive for community funds to aid the hospital was ever needed.

Another major accomplishment of Mitten and the newspaper was their sponsorship, in 1936, of the Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home. The project was undertaken to get the wheels of the local construction industry turning and to show Mesans what their rent money could buy in housing. Nearly every businessman in town took a hand in construction of the house. The house was featured in newspapers throughout its construction and then showcased following its completion. Mitten and his wife moved there in early 1937. Charles Mitten resided there for the rest of his life, and Mrs. Mitten still lives there.

In 1949 Mitten converted the weekly Mesa Journal-Tribune to the Mesa Daily Tribune and founded two other papers, the Mesa News and the Mesa News Shopper. He found that neither he nor the town were ready for a daily newspaper, and sold all three papers to D. W. Calvert in the following year. Also in 1950 he established a wholesale paper business in Mesa with Van B. Brinton. Mitten sold his half of the business to his partner in 1958 and retired.

In his retirement years Charles Mitten wrote and published *The Buckeye Printer* (1971), a book about his father's days as an Arizona newspaperman, and printed a commemorative "Front Page" volume for Mesa's centennial (1978). He was honored many times for his outstanding contributions to his profession and his community. He received Mesa's Outstanding Citizen Award (1961), the Mesa Chamber of Commerce Award for Community Service (1964), the United Fund Medallion for Community Service in Mesa (1966), the Salvation Army William Booth Community Service Award (1974), and the Member Emeritus Award of the Mesa Chamber of Commerce (1981). Perhaps his greatest honor was receiving the 1980 Golden Service Award for fifty years of service to the Arizona Newspaper Association. He was, as a colleague stated, a newspaperman's newspaperman. There wasn't anything about a newspaper Charley Mitten couldn't, wouldn't, or didn't do.

The period of significance associated with this context is 1936 through the end of the historic period in 1938. In 1936 Charles Mitten became associated with the property by taking out the mortgage which allowed his residence to be built. He became actively involved in construction of the house by selecting many of its customized features. Mitten moved into the house in early 1937 and lived there until his death in 1981.

S. Major Bibliographical References

Deed from Clara Pomeroy to Charles A. and Florence K. Mitten dated June 15, 1936

Mortgage to the Valley National Bank, Phoenix, AZ, for that part of lots 3 and 4, Block 10, of Mesa City...in the amount of \$3700 and signed by Charles A. and Florence K. Mitten.

Mitten, Charles A. The Arizona Magazine of the Arizona Republic, March 19, 1978: "They Wanted to Go Fishing."

Zipf, Walter. Valley Spur-Shopper, Dec. 20, 1971: "Retired Publisher Writes His First Book."

Zipf, Mitzi. Sun Valley Spur Shopper, Mesa, 1972. "The Buckeye Printer Recalls 11-Year Life of Weekly Paper."

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre (0.2 acres)

UTM References

A

1	2
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4	2	2	8	1	0
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3	6	9	7	2	1	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the nominated property are the same as those of Tax Parcel Number 138-40-007 3, representing parts of Lots 3 and 4 of Block 10, Mesa City, Maricopa County, Arizona, and further described as beginning at a point 149 feet east of the southwest corner of lot 4 in Block 10, and running thence east 65 feet; thence north 157 feet; thence west 65 feet; thence south 157 feet. See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire 65 foot by 157 foot parcel defined when it was originally platted. This is the present and historic extent of the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Florence K. Mitten/Owner; Edited by Pat Stein, AZ SHPO, Preservation Planner
organization property owner date July 1988
street & number 22 East First Avenue telephone 602-964-4492
city or town Mesa state AZ zip code 85210

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

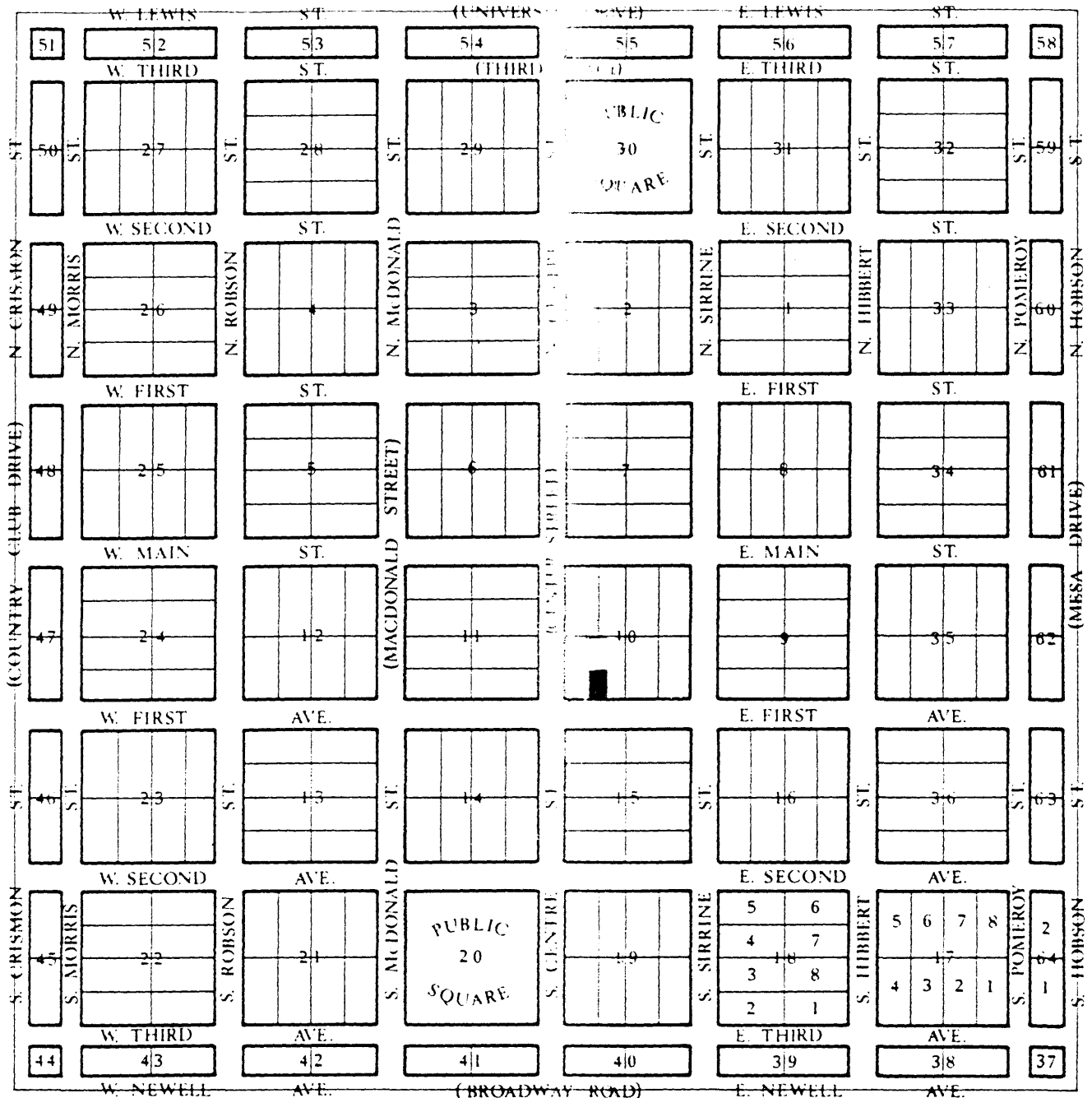
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES, continued:

- Mesa Tribune, January 11, 1980: "State Newspapermen Honor Retired Tribune Publisher."
Chandler Arizonan, August 24, 1981: "Valley Publisher, Civic Leader Mitten Dies."
Arizona Republic, August 26, 1981: "Mitten, Ex-Publisher of 'Mesa Tribune' Dies."
Mesa Rotary Club Cog, August 2, 1981: "We've Had Our Last Meeting with Charlie!"
The Arizona Publisher, Sept.-Oct. 1981: "Arizona Newspaper Pioneer Dies After Accident."
Ottawa (Canada) Citizen, August 25, 1981: "Arizonan Dies Here on Trip."
August 19, 1981: "Elderly Visitor Struck by Car."
August 20, 1981: "Elderly Couple Hit by Car."
August 25, 1981: "Visitor Dies after Completing Dream Tour."
Mesa Tribune, August 26, 1981: "Charles A. Mitten."
Mesa Journal-Tribune (miscellaneous articles, all page 1):
April 26, 1935; March 8, 1935; June 14, 1935; June 21, 1935; June 28, 1935;
October 11, 1935; September 4, 1936; October 23, 1936; December 18, 1936;
January 1, 1937; January 8, 1937; January 15, 1937; January 29, 1937;
February 8, 1937; February 19, 1937; March 5, 1937; April 30, 1937.
Interview with Mrs. Florence Knox Mitten by Pat H. Stein, July 5, 1988.

MESA CITY, ARIZONA



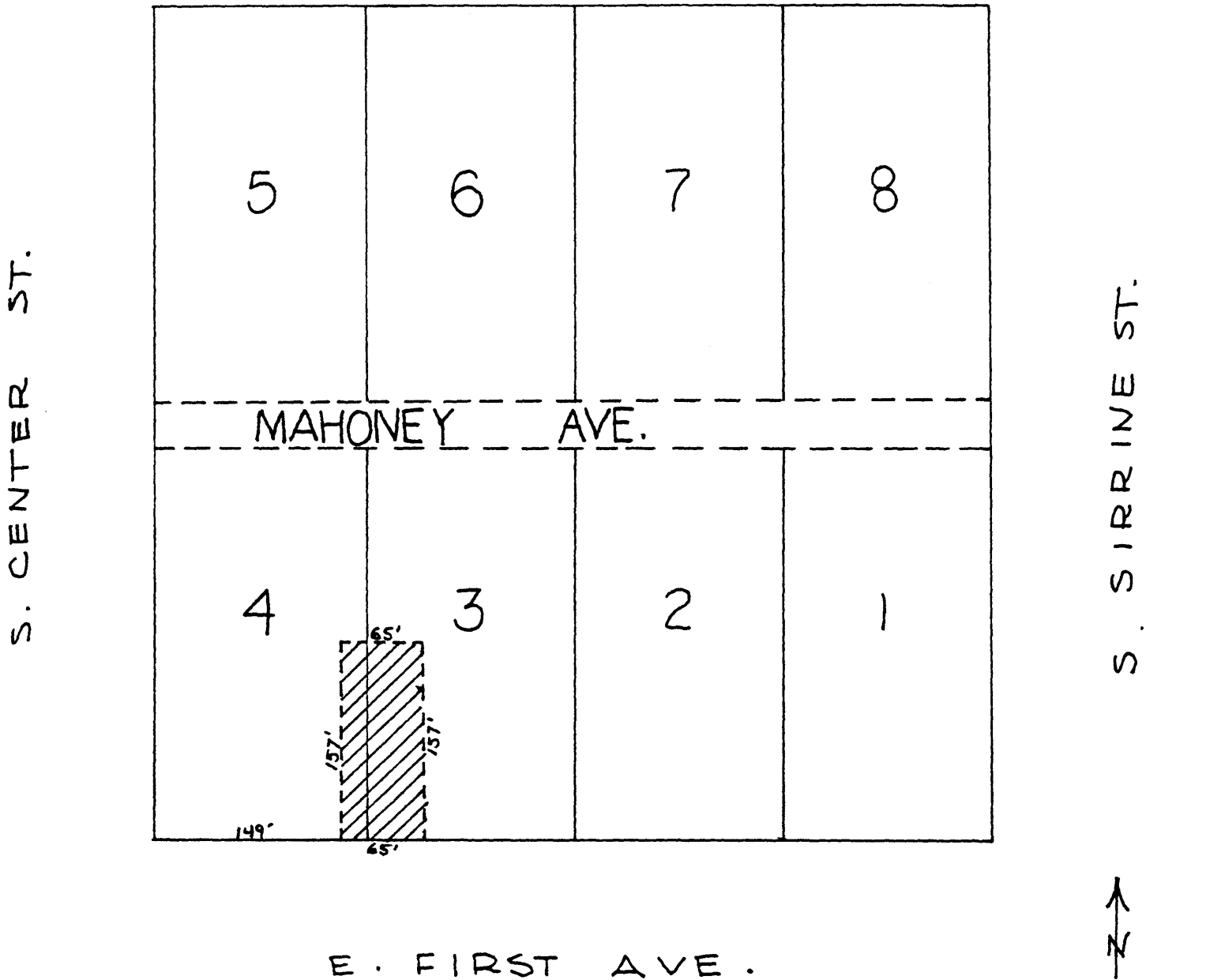
NOTE:
Several Street Names have been changed as follows:

Lewis to Transmission, Fourth Street, Power House, now University.
Newell to Fourth Avenue, now Broadway.
Maricopa to Crismon, Mesa Boulevard, now Country Club Drive.
McDonald & Macdonald.
Packer to Young, now Pomeroy.
Young to Pomeroy, Hobson, now Mesa Drive.

SOURCE: 1906 SURVEY OF MESA CITY, ARIZONA BY P.E. FULLER AND O.A. TURLEY

The original one-square-mile area of Mesa, showing location of the Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home.

APACHE TRAIL - E. MAIN ST. - U.S. HWY. 60-70-80-89



Detail of Block 10 of Mesa townsite, showing location and boundaries of the Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DEC

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1721

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 Mesa Journal - Tribune FHA Demonstration House
other names/site number "Florence Mitten House" NR1988-12-29

2. Location

street & number 238 W. 2nd Street not for publication
city or town Mesa vicinity _____
state Arizona code AZ county Maricopa code 013 zip code 85201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 locally. (____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James W. Gorman AZ STATE
Signature of certifying official

5 DECEMBER 2002
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

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): _____

(s) Signature of Keeper: _____ Date of Action: _____

Sarah D. Bpe 1/23/03

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
[X] public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- [X] building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total. Values: 1, 1.

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: domestic
Sub: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: professional
Sub: office

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Bungalow

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
roof copper on wooden trusses
walls Plastered celotex stucco on woodframe
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning & Development
 Commerce

Period of Significance

1936-1953

Significant Dates

1936 - construction

1937 - Mittens move in

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Charles A and Florence K

Mitten

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Calvin Ault - contractor

J.O. Stradling - drew plans

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
[X] previously listed in the National Register
[X] 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:

- [X] State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
[X] Federal agency
[X] Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 12 422170 3697950
Zone Easting Northing
2 Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing
4 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

The boundaries of the property are the same as those of Tax Parcel Number 138-57-023 represented as MESA TR A E 73.25' OF LOTS 1 & 2 BLK 27 Section and Township. The property is also part of the Robson Historic District.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The boundary includes the entire 80 foot by 100 foot parcel defined when it was originally platted. This is the present extent of the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tony Felice, CLG Liaison original nom. by Florence Mitten/edited by P. Stein

organization City of Mesa Arizona date 8/8/02

street & number 20 E. Main Street, Suite 200 telephone 480-644-3965

city or town Mesa state AZ zip code 85201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

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

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____ **City of Mesa** _____

street & number **20 E. Main Street Suite 200** _____ telephone **480-644-3959** _____

city or town **Mesa** _____ state **AZ** _____ zip code **85201** _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7

Page 1 of 4

MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

Narrative Description:

The Mesa Journal-Tribune Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Demonstration Home is a modestly designed one-story residence built in 1936 by the local newspaper with an FHA-Approved loan. It was listed to the National Register on 12/29/88.

The house was the first home financed by FHA in Mesa, it was also the first refrigerated home and also the first home stuccoed with a new product called Celotex. Celotex was made from sugar cane fibers. At the time of its construction, the building was equipped with all the modern conveniences and materials of its day (such as central air-conditioning) and heating, copper water pipes, custom built-in cabinets, a copper roof and an attached garage). The house was constructed to encourage people from Mesa to use FHA-backed loans to build new housing.

Location

The house was moved to 238 West 2nd Street where it is now part of the Robson Historic district. At the new site the building faces south (as it used to) directly across the street from a public building (similar in setting to the church from which it used to sit). W2nd St. is a neighborhood street with houses to the east and west. Nearby sits the Clara Pomeroy on North Morris St. which was also moved. The configuration is exactly the same as when both houses sat on 1st Avenue and Center Sts. The homes directly to the east, west and north of the Mesa Journal—Tribune FHA Demonstration House are substantially the same as those that used to surround it on 1st Avenue.

Retaining the feeling of setting was very important in the decision to locate the Mitten House to 238 W. 2nd Street. No other location provided such a similar backdrop. The street is residential in character (the same as the previous location) and the predominant houses in the Robson Historic District are Bungalow homes. Nearly half the homes in the district were built in the 1920s and early 1930s. Another popular style of architecture in during the 1920s and 30s was Tudor revival and there are two examples in the neighborhood (in addition to the Pomeroy House). Furthermore, FHA financed houses conformed to the minimum standards of size, materials and construction methods required by the agency's guidelines. Those restrictions encouraged architects and builders to rethink the way houses should be designed and constructed. The Minimal Traditional and Early Ranch style responded to the needs of the homeowner, builders and bankers. There are 17 examples of Minimal Traditional and Early Ranch contributors in the Robson Historic District. Mexican fan palms dot the streetscape; fruit trees, flowers, and Italian Cyprus provide landscaping for individual houses along the block.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 **Page** 2 of 4

MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

Construction and Design: The house is of wood-frame construction built on a poured concrete foundation, making the floor approximately one foot above grade. Designed by J. O. Stradling, a Mesa builder and cabinetmaker, the single-story house is reminiscent both of a bungalow and a Spanish Colonial Revival Style home in terms of its massing, roof line, surface finish, fenestration, and porch, yet lacks the architectural details that would place it squarely within either of these traditions.

Exterior: Interior and exterior walls consist of plastered and painted Celotex. The roof has a low-pitched, compound gable roof oriented perpendicular to the axis of the street. A circular vent under the main gable of the house lends distinction to the roofline and is mirrored in an identical vent under a smaller, front gable above the living room. An eave of the latter, projects eastward to form the roof of the entryway porch. A garage attached to the house at its eastern side also has a low-pitched, gable roof. The roof of the house and garage is of copper and has needed no repairs since its construction in 1936. The Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Home was the first building in Mesa to have a copper roof.

The windows consist of three-over-one wooden sash windows on the main (south) elevation and steel casement windows on the north, east, and west elevations. The two bedrooms each have corner steel-casement windows. In the more temperate months windows can be opened.

Outside doors number three, all original: one enters the living room from the small entry porch, one leads from the service porch to the kitchen, and the third leads from the service porch into the east side of the house.

Interior: The Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home has a living room (17'3" by 14') with dining alcove (5'4" by 10'), a kitchen (9'7" by 16'4"), west bedroom (9'8" by 18'), east bedroom (11' by 16'), bathroom (5' by 10'), and a central air conditioning room (6'11" by 4'). All rooms open onto a central hallway. The attached garage is now a family room.

The floors in the living-dinning area, hallway, and the bedrooms are of hardwood over plywood sub-flooring. All except one bedroom floor have been covered with carpeting. The kitchen and bathroom floors are of soft wood that was originally covered with "battleship" (extra heavy-duty) linoleum but is now covered with vinyl sheeting.

The three original types of plaster finish on the interior walls remain: kitchen and bathroom walls are plastered smooth and have enamel paint; bedroom walls have a sand-textured plaster finish; the living-dinning area and hall have a textured plaster finish.

The living/dinning room has a 9 ft coved ceiling, dropping to 8 ft in the dinning alcove. The two bedrooms, kitchen, and bath have 8 ft un-coved ceilings. In the hall, the ceiling drops to 6'8" to allow air conditioning ducts to cross the hall from the air conditioning room to the east bedroom, bath, and kitchen. Ducts to the living-dinning area and to the west bedroom go directly through the walls.

This was the first house in Mesa to have air conditioning. The heater (a Pacific Gas Radiator Company Automatic Gas-Fired Furnace) and the air conditioner (a Frick refrigeration unit) were originally housed in the small brick

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

basement in the center of the house. After 46 years of service, the Pacific unit was replaced in October 1983; the Flick unit had been replaced a few years prior. To keep Mrs. Mitten from having to go downstairs, the serviceman installed the new units on the main floor in the stairwell leading to the basement. The ducts, which carry air from the heating-cooling units to the rest of the house, are original.

The 1936 home had many amenities, which have survived to the present. There is a wall receptacle representing the bygone era when milk bottles were delivered to the house. The receptacle has two small doors, one outside and the other inside the kitchen, for easy bottle exchange between milkman and housewife. Copper water pipes throughout the house are original and still function. Crane-brand bathroom fixtures as well as the original kitchen cabinets are still in use. The kitchen cabinets contain grain bins, which are lined with metal sheeting. Glass or engraved brass door knobs and engraved brass escutcheons are on each interior door. Many of the light fixtures, including fluorescent tubes with chrome holders in the bedrooms and bath, are original and in working order. The house has never needed to be rewired and, for its day, had an exceptional number of wall outlets; 4 in each bedroom, 6 in the living-dinning area, 7 in the kitchen, and 2 in the service porch. The west bedroom features a built-in clothes hamper on casters; a clothes chute to the hamper connects with the bathroom. The closet of each bedroom is equipped with a tiny steel casement window to ventilate the storage as necessary. Separate built-ins in the kitchen provided special space for Mrs. Mitten's iron and her ironing board. The 1936 Mesa house was modern, convenient, attractive, and affordable.

Alterations: Only minor alterations have been made to the house since the historic period:

1. The garage was converted to a family room. The exterior was not changed: however, the garage door was fastened shut. The four windows on the garage door are original. The interior of the room was paneled, it was given a ceiling, and its concrete floor was covered with vinyl.
2. The heating and cooling units were relocated from the basement to the main floor.

INTEGRITY

The main changes that have occurred have been the conversion of the garage to a family room and the addition of the front window shade and carports. These changes are unobtrusive and have a minimal impact on the appearance of the house. The lines of the window shade and carports are like those of the original house.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

Mitten became associated with the property by taking out the mortgage which allowed his residence to be built. He became actively involved in the construction of the house by selecting many of its customized features listed below:

- Copper roof – first of its kind in Mesa
- Refrigerated – first of its kind in Mesa

- Attached Garage

- Celotex and plaster walls interior and exterior

- Center subfloor room constructed of brick contains the cooling equipment and a large cement tunnel from the north side of the house brings in fresh air.

- Nine foot cove ceilings in the living room.

- A wall receptacle for an iron next to a hidden ironing board in the kitchen.

- A wall receptacle for milk bottles with one door on the outside and one door on the inside of the kitchen, providing the milkman a safe place to deposit the milk.

- Laundry basket on casters received clothing through an opening in the bathroom wall.

Original door hardware and light fixtures remain.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8

Page 1 of 8

MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

Narrative Statement of Significance:

SUMMARY

The 1936 Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home is significant under Criterion A because it was the first home in Mesa to be financed by a Federal Housing Administration secured loan. The Mesa Journal-Tribune sponsored the construction of the home to promote the FHA and to prove to Mesa citizens what \$50 per month could provide in home ownership. The project did, in fact, result in a boom of FHA-sponsored construction in Mesa in the late 1930's. Editorial columns which appeared in the newspaper and advertisements placed in the paper by contractors who were constructing the home provide an usually detailed chronicle of its construction, evidencing the prominent materials of the day.

The property is also significant under Criterion B as the residence most closely associated with the productive life of Charles A. Mitten, a Mesa newspaperman and civic leader. Mitten was publisher of the Mesa Journal-Tribune and negotiated the FHA loan, which financed the construction of the house. The home remained in Mitten's ownership and was his primary place of residence until his death in 1981 at the age of 82. During the historic period (through 1938) Mitten co-published the Chandler Arizonan and the Mesa Journal-Tribune, and led a successful fundraising effort to build the Southside District Hospital. He also is notable as the developer, printer, and distributor of "Mesamoney", a local scrip used to counter the effects of the Great Depression.

HISTORIC CONTEXT A: Association with the Development of the Federal Housing Administration Program in Mesa

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) is a program of the federal government that insures private loans for new housing and home repairs. The program was created by the National Housing Act of July 27, 1934 in response to three problems, which resulted from the Great Depression: (1) America's housing stock was declining as buildings were falling into disrepair; (2) the unemployment rate was high in the building trades and allied occupations, with plants idle or running only part time in virtually all of the heavy industries; and (3) normal channels of credit needed reopening to stimulate a revival of repair work and new building after several years of lowered activity.

The goal of the Federal Housing Administration was to cooperate with private industry to make better housing available to the American people. The Act of 1934 had three provisions, known as Titles I, II, and III:

Title I encouraged the immediate modernization, repair, and improvement of homes by providing that any advances of credit or lands made for this purpose be insured by the FHA against losses up to 20 percent of the total amount of such advances made by any bank or other approved

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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**MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA**

Narrative Statement of Significance:

financial institution. Loans were to be based primarily on the individual property owner's character and ability to pay;

Title II provided that mortgages, in order to be eligible for insurance, had to conform to certain conditions designed to protect borrowers against excessive charges and to discourage the assumption of obligations above the borrower's reasonable capability to pay; it also provided for complete retirement of the mortgage by means of small amortization payments at frequent intervals;

Title III authorized the establishment of national mortgage associations; organized with private capital, these associations were to aid in the flow of capital from areas with surplus funds seeking safe, long-term investment to areas where such funds were not adequate to meet local home financing needs.

The FHA embarked on an aggressive campaign to encourage prospective homeowners to take advantage of its program. The FHA sometimes referred to itself as "the easy loan program" and described its offerings as "manna from heaven." Press releases from 1935 stressed that up to \$2,000 was available to each homeowner for repairs "to bring homes up to the standard of the time" and up to \$16,000 was available to builders of new homes. Persons of good character (defined as having a means of livelihood and being able to meet payments) were encouraged to apply. Those wishing to build new homes needed to have 20 percent of the value of the finished project in order to borrow the remaining 80 percent. Homeowners who wished to refinance present mortgages could also borrow up to 60 percent of the appraised value of their homes. All FHA-backed mortgages were to be paid off in 20 years or less. To further entice people to take out mortgages, the FHA built, with much fanfare and publicity, demonstration homes in various communities. Demonstration homes were modest but attractive, and fitted with all the modern conveniences.

In Arizona, response to the FHA was surprisingly strong. By June, 1935 Arizona, the nation's youngest state, led the nation in its quota of modernization and repair FHA loans and ranked sixteenth in its quota of new construction loans. So far in the lead was Arizona that its quota of modernization and repair loans was at least double those of all but six states. By June 15, 1935, nearly every city and town in Arizona had broken ground for a FHA home.

The success of the Arizona FHA program depended in part on its aggressive advertising. The state FHA office saturated the press with articles about its loan program. In cooperation with the state office, local papers ran Better housing Sections which described the federal program and benefits to be gained from it. In early summer of 1935, the state FHA office calculated that 80 percent of all advertising in Arizona newspapers was directly attributable to the National Housing Act.

For reasons that are not clear, and to the consternation of state FHA director Thomas Elliott, response to the federal program lagged in the small (population 3500) farming community of Mesa. Several homeowners

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 8

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**MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA**

Narrative Statement of Significance:

secured modernization and repair loans but, by spring of 1935, no one had secured a FHA-backed loan for new housing. Aided by the Mesa Journal-Tribune, the state office promptly stepped up its campaign to publicize its program. Front page articles and editorials carried headlines such as "New Opportunity for Mesa to Profit under Housing Act," "Credit through F.H.A. Loans," "FHA Program Aids Arizona," and "A Golden Opportunity," and made promises of "no red tape." Mesa Mayor J. G. Peterson responded on June 28, 1935 by launching a Better Housing Program to encourage the public to build with FHA-backed loans. Spurred by, both local government and press, Mesa's citizens still refused to take the bait. In the summer of 1935, the Mesa Journal-Tribune announced that Mesa would soon see a "Herman Winter demonstration (FHA) home," but the house was never built.

It was not until April of 1936 that plans for an FHA demonstration home in Mesa were finalized. The project was set up in the following manner, which demonstrates how a typical demonstration home worked. The newspaper would sponsor the house, which would be known as the "Mesa Journal-Tribune Federal Housing Administration Demonstration Home." The Valley National Bank would carry the mortgage, and construction would be done using mostly local contractors. The building would be open to visitors during its construction, and would feature a special three day open house upon completion. A sign would be prominently displayed on the property to announce its backing by the FHA. For the purpose of securing the loan, newspaper publisher Charles A. Mitten and his wife, Florence K. Mitten, agreed to sign the mortgage for the transaction. The house would be built on part of two lots, which the Mittens had purchased from Clara Pomeroy in June of 1936. The land was part of the old 10 acre Pomeroy homestead, but no previous construction had occurred on the site.

One newspaper article indicates that the Mittens did intend to buy the completed house when they signed their names to the mortgage.

It is the belief of the publishers of the Mesa Journal-Tribune that Mesa needs more homes and if those who rent could learn just what can be done with rent money they would soon be in a home of their own (Mesa Journal-Tribune, September 4, 1936, page 1, columns 3-4).

However, according to Florence Mitten, she and her husband intended to move into the house from the time they signed their names to the mortgage. They took an active role in construction of the house, selecting many custom features to make their future home more comfortable and livable. The home was completed by Christmas of 1936 and was the scene of an open house in mid-January, 1937. The Mittens moved into the building in early 1937.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

Narrative Statement of Significance:

It was a good house, solidly built, copper roofed, and air-conditioned. It was also convenient and practical, with a step saver kitchen, a garage built on the front for easy access rather than on the side or rear, a thermostat-controlled heating and cooling unit to "maintain a temperature of not less than 75 degrees in winter, and not more than 80 degrees in summer," and a roof carrying "an unconditional guarantee of satisfaction." It cost approximately \$5,000 to build and furnish, and carried a 20-year mortgage with payments of \$50 per month.

Construction of the Mesa Journal-Tribune house provided employment for many individuals, most of them from Mesa. Articles and advertisements in the newspaper provide a detailed account of the many contractors, supplies, and products involved:

Plans drawn by: J. O. Stradling, Mesa

General Contractor: Calvin Ault, Mesa

Roofing: Copper Roofs of Arizona, Inc., Phoenix

General Building Materials: O'Malley Lumber Company, Mesa

Sashes, doors, sash windows, steel casement windows, and mill work: F. P. Drew and Sons Lumber Company, Mesa

Plumbing: O. S. Stapley Company, Mesa, using Crane fixtures

Painting: Fred T. Ash, Mesa, using Sherwin-Williams paints

Plastering: Wallace Bond, Mesa

Heating and Cooling: W. F. Gollaher, Mesa, using a Pacific Gas Radiator Company Automatic Gas-Fired Furnace and a Frick refrigeration unit purchased from Bell and Coerver (Phoenix)

Electrical: Sutton Electric Company, Mesa

Cabinets: J. O. Stradling, Mesa

Interior Furnishings: Paul L. Sale and Company, Mesa

Landscaping: W. P. Hawes, Mesa

Appliances: North Brothers Hardware Company, Mesa using Norge range, washer, and refrigerator

The demonstration project stimulated the construction of other FHA-backed homes in Mesa. As the construction home was being completed, the Millet and Clark homes were being started on Clark Street, while John Jensen and Ernest Huber were building their FHA homes in other parts of the city. Figures released by the Mesa city clerk in January, 1937, indicated that applications for permits to build in Mesa during 1936 came within a few thousand dollars of doubling the dollar value represented by permits filed in 1935. Whereas, 29 jobs were undertaken during 1935, 47 were begun in 1936, excluding figures from public construction projects (schools, comfort stations, and so forth). In January of 1937 the Mesa branch of the Valley National Bank reported that loans made by the bank for construction of new homes and home modernization had reached a new high of \$353, 143. The city clerk attributed the building boom to the Federal Housing Administration plan of long-term financing by private institutions such as Valley National Bank.

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MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

Narrative Statement of Significance:

Like other demonstration homes, The Mesa Journal-Tribune/FHA experiment proved successful in introducing the concept of FHA-backed financing into this central Arizona community. The Mesa Example represents, in microcosm, a process that was taking place across the United States and that revolutionized the housing industry. The average middle-class family could now afford a home formerly beyond its reach. The channels of communication between those with money to lend and those needing money to borrow were reopened. Owing in part to FHA, but also largely to other New Deal programs, the construction trades and allied occupations were revitalized. At the end of its first year of operation, the FHA estimated that, nationally, 750,000 persons had been given employment as a direct result of its program. For the same period, the FHA documented that building permits for repairs and modernization in approximately 760 cities showed a 29.6 percent increase over the previous year.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT B: Association with Charles A. Mitten,
Newspaper Publisher and Civic Leader**

The Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home was the residence most closely associated with the productive life of Charles A. Mitten. Mitten and his family were the first and only persons to live in the house. Mitten became associated with the house at the start of its construction in 1936. The house was Mitten's residence from early 1937 until his death in 1981.

Charles A. Mitten (1899-1981) was born in Oakley, Kansas. His father, P. R. Mitten, was a newspaperman who came west because his wife had tuberculosis. Following her death, P. R. Mitten worked assorted jobs until, by 1912, he had enough money to establish the Buckeye Valley News, a weekly journal in an agricultural community west of Phoenix. Young "Charley" Mitten learned all aspects of the newspaper business from his dad while attending Phoenix Union High School. After graduating in 1918, Charley enlisted in the Marines and served in the Philippines during World War I.

Discharged in 1920, Charles Mitten rejoined his father and worked with elder Mitten on various newspaper ventures until the latter's death in 1947. In 1922, the Mittens discontinued the Buckeye Valley News and purchased the Chandler Arizonan, another weekly newspaper.

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MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

Narrative Statement of Significance:

Charles Mitten began to take a leadership role in civic affairs while in his early thirties. During his years in Chandler (1922 to 1932) he served as director and president of the Chandler Chamber of Commerce, noble grand of the Odd Fellows and master of the Masonic Lodge.

1927 Charles Mitten married Florence Knox. Two years later, using some of the privileges afforded veterans, Mitten filed for and received a homestead patent for a quarter-section of land east of Mesa. The Mittens resided on the homestead for approximately one year, to satisfy residency requirements of the Homestead Act as amended. From 1929 through 1936 the publisher and his wife moved several times between the communities of Chandler and Mesa.

In 1932 the Mittens learned that the Mesa Journal-Tribune was for sale and with John C. McPhee, Fred Jahn and V.W. Leyda, purchased the weekly newspaper. During the next nine years Charles gradually bought out the others interest until by 1941, he had become its full owner. In 1932 he helped organize the Arizona Newspaper Association and was elected its first president.

Publishing a newspaper during the Depression tested Mitten's mettle and further proved his leadership abilities. When the First National Bank and the Bank of Chandler closed their doors in 1932, the businessmen of Mesa were without money for three weeks until Mitten and his Journal-Tribune associates devised a clever scheme. They printed \$1,000 worth of "Mesa money," met their payroll with it, and convinced local merchants to accept it as script. The "money" was redeemable at the Journal-Tribune in advertising, printing, subscriptions or cash at the end of six months. Soon there was a demand for more Mesa money and Mitten and his staff printed more. Decades later, Mitten tried to find some of the script to add to his scrapbook, but found none at all; it seemed, it had all been successfully redeemed for cash or services.

During the Depression, Mitten developed several promotional events to amuse his fellow Mesans the to bring outsiders into town to spend money. Probably the most flamboyant of Mitten's productions was the time the Journal-Tribune hired a motorcyclist to crash through a flaming board wall erected between a bank and a drug store. The rider revved in front of the Journal-Tribune office, sped between the parted crowds, hit the fiery wall, and safely crashed through. Another Journal-Tribune caper was the weekly "Chicken Day" when the newspaper accepted chickens in payment for subscriptions. Soon the paper was overwhelmed with fowls in crates. They were placed on a large flat-bed truck, which started from Maricopa Inn at Center and Main and headed west. Every 200 or 300 feet live chickens were tossed to the crowd. "We certainly found out in a hurry who the hungry people in Mesa were," Charley recalled. Many were the stunts that the Mittens resorted to during the Depression, but his newspaper stayed in business and gained subscribers.

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**MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA**

Narrative Statement of Significance:

One of Mitten's greatest accomplishments during the 1930s was the building of a community hospital and an addition to it. As president of the Southside District Hospital, Mitten signed his name in 1932 to \$10,000 worth of 4 percent bonds, payable in cash or services in 10 years. In 1938 he again put his name to a loan of some \$150,000 to build a surgical addition to the hospital. During the 34 years Mitten served on the hospital board all bonds were paid off and no drive for community funds to aid the hospital was ever needed.

Another major accomplishment of Mitten and the newspaper was their sponsorship, in 1935, of the Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration Home. The project was undertaken to get the wheels of the local construction industry turning and to show Mesans what their rent money could buy in housing. Nearly every businessman in town took a hand in construction of the house. The house was featured in newspapers throughout its construction and then showcased following completion. Mitten and his wife moved there in early 1937. Charles Mitten resided there for the rest of his life, as did his wife until her death in the late 1990s.

In 1949 Mitten converted the weekly Mesa Journal-Tribune to the Mesa Daily Tribune and founded two other papers, the Mesa News and the Mesa News Shopper. He found that neither he nor the town were ready for a daily newspaper and sold all three to D.W. Calvert the following year. Also in 1950 he established a wholesale paper business in Mesa with Van D. Brinton. Mitten sold his half of the business to his partner in 1958 and retired.

In his retirement years, Charles Mitten wrote and published the Buckeye Printer (1971), a book about his father's days as an Arizona newspaperman, and printed a commemorative "Front Page" volume for Mesa's centennial (1978). He was honored many times for his outstanding contributions to his profession and his community. He received Mesa's Outstanding Citizen Award (1961) the Mesa Chamber of Commerce Award for Community Service (1964) the United Fund Medallion for Community Service in Mesa (1966), the Salvation Army William Booth Community Service Award (1974) and the Member Emeritus Award of the Mesa Chamber of Commerce 1981. Perhaps his greatest honor was receiving the 1980 Golden Service Award for fifty years of service to the Arizona Newspaper Association. He was, as a colleague stated, a newspaper man's newspaperman. There wasn't anything Charlie couldn't do.

Continuing Impact on Community

This resource also retains its impact despite its new setting. Clearly the influence of the Mesa Journal Tribune FHA Demonstration Home had an impact on the historic development of the Robson Historic District. It is likely that the very homes that the FHA Mitten House now sits near were influenced by this demonstration

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MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME
MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

Narrative Statement of Significance:

home, its creation and demonstration of affordability and accessibility. Nearly half the homes in the district were built in the 1920s and early 1930s. Furthermore, FHA financed houses conformed to the minimum standards of size, materials and construction methods required by the agency's guidelines. Those restrictions encouraged architects and builders to rethink the way houses should be designed and constructed. The Minimal Traditional and Early Ranch style responded to the needs of the homeowner, builders and bankers. There are 17 examples of Minimal Traditional and Early Ranch contributors in the Robson Historic District.

The FHA Mitten House is also significant under Criterion B because of its association with the former owner and publisher of the Mesa Tribune, Charles Mitten. Mr. Mitten's historic association with the house is retained, regardless of its location.

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MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

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Mesa Journal Tribune. (Miscellaneous articles all on page 1). April 26, 1935; March 8, 1935; June 14, 1935; October 11, 1935; September 4, 1936; October 23, 1936; December 18, 1936; January 1, 1937; January 8, 1937; January 15, 1937; January 29, 1937; February 8, 1937; February 19, 1937; March 5, 1937; April 30, 1937.

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Mortgage to the Valley National Bank, Phoenix AZ for that part of lots 3 and 4 Block 10 of Mesa City ... in the amount of #3700 and signed by Charles A. and Florence K. Mitten.

Mitten, Charles A. 1978. The Arizona Magazine of the Arizona Republic. "They Wanted to Go Fishing."

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Zipf, Walter. 1971. Valley Spur-Shopper. "Retired Publisher Writes His First Book."

Zipf, Mitzi. 1972. Sun Valley Spur Shopper. "The Buckeye Printer Recalls 11-year Life of Weekly Paper."

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MESA JOURNAL TRIBUNE FHA DEMONSTRATION HOME

MARICOPA COUNTY ARIZONA

Photographer: Tony Felice, CLG Liaison – City of Mesa, Arizona

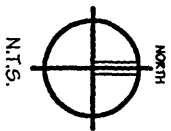
Date: September 12, 2002

Location of Negatives: City of Mesa, Arizona
Historic Preservation Office
20 E. Main Street, Suite 200
Mesa, Arizona 85201







Photo	Direction
#1	N front of house
#2	NW ¼ angle of front of house
#3	NE ¼ angle of front of house
#4	SW ¼ angle of back of house
#5	E view of streetscape on street where house is located
#6	E view of streetscape on street where house is located
#7	NE view of streetscape from across the street where house is located
#8	NE view of streetscape from across the street where house is located
#9	E view of streetscape from across the street where house is located



National Register Historic District
BOUNDARY MAP
ROBSON
HISTORIC DISTRICT
 Mesa, Arizona
 March 2002

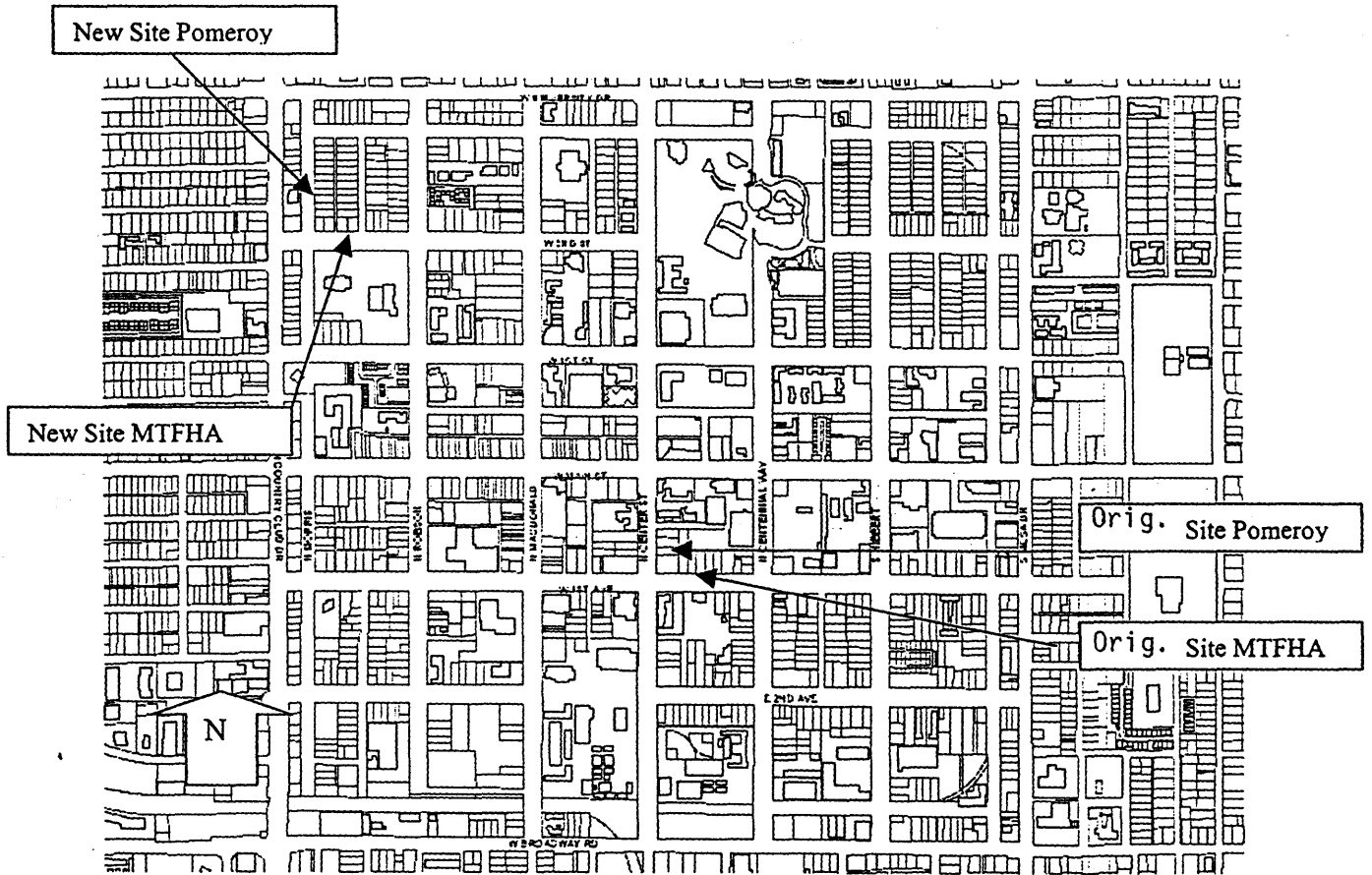


N.T.S.

-  Individually Eligible Property
-  Contributing Property to a District
-  Non-Eligible Property due to age
-  Non-Eligible Property due to Integrity
-  District Boundary
-  Photo Key

Mesa Journal-Tribune FHA Demonstration House
(MTFHA)
Maricopa County, Arizona

Original address: 22 E. First
Current address: 238 W. 2nd Street



VICINITY MAP OF TOWN CENTER