National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY/CONTEXT

7. Description

The Ashurst House, constructed in 1897, is sited on a corner lot on the periphery of a dense historical neighborhood west of downtown Flagstaff, Arizona. Flagstaff, a city of 40,000, is situated on the pine-clad southern flank of the San Francisco Peaks in northern Arizona. Although the west downtown neighborhood suffers from some encroachment of business and municipal property, it retains much of its historical integrity. The well maintained houses reflect several historic architectural styles and periods.

The Ashurst House is a compact $1\frac{1}{2}$ story vernacular Queen Anne style brick cottage of irregular plan measuring ca. 54 feet deep and 30 feet wide. It is generally characterized by a full veranda and a pyramidal hip roof featuring a central gabled dormer and an offset pedimented gable end.

Associated with the main house is a one story, concrete and brick cottage (the Stanfill Cottage) sited to the rear and backing the alley. The core of this structure was built sometime before 1892; a 1907 front addition doubled its size. This is the oldest extant building on the block.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Exterior:

Extending across the width of the Ashurst House on the main (north) facade is a symmetrical three bay porch articulated by turned wooden posts and decorative wrought iron railings. The central doorway features Queen Anne stained glass panels (multicolored square panes surrounding a central pane), ornate wood carving, and an operable transom window above. Flanking the doorway are tall, paired 1/1 wood sash windows. These windows, identical to those on all elevations, feature segmental arches and brick sills. Decorative two row dogtooth corbelling is set high in the wall and runs along all elevations of the house. The eave line is detailed with a plain boxed cornice and fascia board. Above this, a central gabled dormer and an offset pedimented gable end rise from the hipped roof. Each of these has a 1/1 wood sash window surrounded by imbricated shingles. A corbelled brick chimney is located at the apex of the pyramidal hip roof. The roof is finished with asbestos shingles. All of the major features on the north elevation combine to give the structure a strong feeling of verticality.

The long (54 foot) west elevation has four segmentally arched 1/1 wood sash windows flanked by decorative garden latticework. A short (ca. 3 feet tall) brick buttress is located at the juncture of the original house and a rear addition. A secondary brick chimney rises from the roof at this point. This brick addition was constructed in 1907 and measures some 26 feet deep and 12 feet wide. It was built as a pumphouse over a subterranean cistern located on the west side of the southern elevation. An enclosed wooden porch (ca. 4 feet wide, 6 feet deep) abuts the east side of the addition and has a wooden six step stairway. This stairway leads up to the rear door which features a double arched window. Yet another open wooden porch extends from this to cover an arched basement door.

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The short (28 foot) east elevation has a single 1/1 wood sash window to the south. Decorative garden latticework provides additional character.

The house has a full basement, a rare feature in Flagstaff. To accommodate the basement, the foundation was raised approximately 2 feet above grade. This is indicated by a broad, painted, brick water table situated at the first floor level on all elevations. Two segmentally arched basement windows open from the west elevation basement level.

Interior:

The interior of the Ashurst House is comprised of seven rooms. The front door opens into the living room, and, moving from front to back, one passes through the dining room, kitchen, and study (the 1907 addition). The two bedrooms and single bath are located on the east side of the house, off the living and dining rooms. An enclosed stairway is located opposite the rear door and leads to the single upstairs room (the former Weather Bureau office). Now used for storage, this room has the chimney (plastered) located in the center.

The house interior retains original decorative trim and hardware throughout. The brick fireplace in the living room is also original.

Stanfill Cottage

Exterior:

The small cottage to the rear of the Ashurst House was built sometime before 1892. It stood alone as a single room, concrete-walled dwelling until 1897 when the Ashurst House was constructed. By 1910 it had doubled in size with the addition of two brick front rooms. According to the present owners, the front rooms were constructed with bricks remaining from the 1907 addition on the Ashurst House; therefore, two significant construction dates for this structure are pre-1892 and 1907.

This cottage now measures ca.32 feet deep and 33 feet wide and has an added (post 1940) wood frame garage. The roof of the original structure is a clipped gable, and a shed roof covers the front addition. Roofing material is asbestos shingle. Extending from the 1907 shed addition is a small five bay porch supported by six square wooden posts. The front door is located centrally and is flanked on each side by single floor-to-roof 1/1 wood sash windows. A simple brick chimney rises from the west central roof area.

The east and west elevations of the brick addition feature single 1/1 wood sash windows with segmental arches. The west elevation has the wooden garage sheathed in clapboard siding attached to the original structure. The east elevation has a large square 1/1 wood sash window in the original section.

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The rear, south elevation is plastered and features an exterior plastered chimney to the east and a small four pane kitchen window to the west.

Interior:

Four interior rooms are divided by a central hallway and the former exterior concrete wall. The front two rooms are bedrooms, and the hallway leads into the living room. The kitchen and bath are at the rear of the house next to the living room.

Integrity:

The 1907 modifications were carefully designed to blend well with the original structures and are also considered significant for purposes of this nomination. Also, after 1907 a window was added to the upstairs north gable of the Ashurst House, and this is considered a potentially significant modification.

Both structures have been well maintained by the present owners over the past forty years. Each building received some alterations in the early 1940's, but they are relatively insignificant. All of the original floors in each structure were replaced with oak flooring, and the ceilings were lowered some 18 inches. The original plastered ceilings remain in place above. Also, the entry between the living and dining rooms was increased in size from a single door to a larger opening some eight feet wide. At that time, molding for this opening was made to replicate the detailing of the original window and door trim by Babbitt's, a local department store. Finally, new drywall was placed in the upstairs room.

The exterior of the Ashurst House received even fewer alterations, limited to placement of a concrete deck on the porch and wrought iron railings between the turned posts. Also, a low concrete footing was placed around the perimeter of the basement. It is recognized that the introduction of the concrete is undesirable from both a technical conservation standpoint (due to the possibility of deterioration of the adjacent softer brick) and for architectural reasons (because of the loss of wood porch decking), but in both respects, the impacts have been minimal.

As previously mentioned, the Stanfill Cottage renovations (ca. 1940) were limited to replacement of floors and lowering of the ceiling. The wooden garage with clapboard siding was also added at about that time.

The present owners have enhanced the property's appearance by installing and maintaining pleasant garden landscaping. The property is visually appealing and retains its historical and architectural integrity.

8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1799 X 1800–1899 1900–	X_ architecture art	community planning conservation economics education engineering		sculpture social/ humanitarian
	Ashurst House: 1897,1 Stanfill Cottage: pre- ignificance (in one paragr		urst House: J.C.Mill nfill Cottage: Unkno	igan wn

SUMMARY/CONTEXT

The Ashurst House is significant on several levels: architectural, political, and scientific. It is a superb local example of vernacular Victorian architecture and represents an early local Flagstaff building industry. It was the home of Senator Henry F. Ashurst, a prominent regional and national politician, who resided in the house during the early years of his career. When Arizona achieved statehood in 1912, Ashurst became one of the first two U.S. Senators from Arizona, a position held until 1940. The Ashurst House also played a historic scientific role, housing the first U.S. Weather Bureau in the region for a period of fourteen years.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Flagstaff, Arizona, was founded in 1882, largely as a result of Atlantic and Pacific Railroad construction. Ties were needed for the railroad, and a large sawmill which would dominate the local economy for the next several decades operated in Flagstaff to supply the demand. With railroad construction completed, Flagstaff became a hub for major regional activities -- lumbering, ranching, farming, and tourism.

The decades before the turn of the century were busy ones for Flagstaff, and it was still a young and rapidly growing community when the Ashurst House was constructed of brick in the autumn of 1897.

As was the fate of many western frontier towns, Flagstaff suffered a series of disastrous fires in the 1880s. Consequently, builders sought fireproof construction materials. According to the local paper, an 1897 town ordinance required that:

"...all building in the fire limits to be of brick, stone, or iron," consequently, the buildings erected were one of that class. "Brick and stone buildings can be erected here at a lower cost than at any point in Arizona. This largely due to the fact that the building material is all at our doors..." (The Coconino Sun, Jan. 29, 1898.)

Indeed, by 1894 a brick kiln was operating one mile east of town, adjacent to a sandstone quarry, to supply part of this demand. Owned by J.C. Milligan, the brick-yard supplied large quantities of brick for both commercial and domestic structures. Milligan was a prominent Flagstaff citizen as this advertisement proclaims: "J.C. Milligan, Contractor and Builder, Manufacturer of Brick and Lime, Also Justice of the Peace, Flagstaff Precinct"(Flagstaff Sun-Democrat, May 6, 1897). He was quite active in the local building industry during the years around the turn of the century, between ca. 1894 and 1910. In 1897 he constructed the Flagstaff City Hall on Leroux Street (since demolished), two downtown commercial structures (the James Loy office

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

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building on Leroux Street and the Temple Bar on San Francisco Street for J.F. Hawks), and what would become known as the Ashurst House (but was then referred to as "the Milligan cottage" since Milligan constructed it).

Milligan later (1907) built the J.C. Milligan residence for his own family, just one block east at 323 West Aspen.

Although rebuilding in Flagstaff undoubtedly demolished many of Milligan's structures, several exist which show affinities to his building style and appear to be constructed with "Milligan" bricks. His bricks are distinctive because they are made with a local red clay, and they have a somewhat coarse texture. Although it is not known whether Milligan actually designed or even built all the structures constructed with his bricks, they do share common architectural features. Dwellings typically display vernacular interpretations of the popular Victorian Queen Anne style, and both commercial and domestic structures feature arches and decorative brick corbelling. Some extant structures which are known to have been constructed with Milligan bricks include the Powers residence (1906), 415 N. Leroux; Hick's Boarding House (ca. 1902), 7 W. Phoenix; the F.D. Crable house (ca. 1893), 503 N. Leroux; the Carriage House (ca. 1904), 413 N. San Francisco; Cottage Place Restaurant (no date), 126 W. Cottage; a commercial block on the south side of Aspen Avenue at Leroux Street (ca. 1900); and the Milligan House (1907), 323 W. Aspen. Additionally, many wood frame structures have corbelled Milligan brick chimneys.

These were, indeed, prosperous years for Milligan, who was "kept busy supplying brick for the structures that are springing up all over town" (Flagstaff Sun-Democrat, June 10, 1897). West Aspen Avenue enjoyed a flurry of residential construction during this time as noted in the October 14, 1897, Sun-Democrat announcing the construction of the Ashurst House: "J.C. Milligan has the foundation laid for a brick residence on Aspen Avenue. This avenue is becoming very popular of late for new residences."

The ownership history of the property is relatively simple. Both the Ashurst House and Stanfill Cottage have been bought and sold as a single property through time. The early history of ownership is unclear since the original deed was lost. J.C. Milligan apparently owned the property in 1897 when he constructed the Ashurst House. He then sold it to Elizabeth Renoe in 1900. It was owned by her and her husband, Henry F. Ashurst, until 1931 when James T. Aiton bought the property. By 1938 Aiton had gone into debt, and the property was sold to William E. and E. Juanita Stanfill on the last day of 1938. They still own the property. After raising their family in the Ashurst House, they moved into the rear cottage and have rented out the Ashurst House since the late 1950s.

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ARCHITECTURE/INDUSTRY

When evaluated within the context of Flagstaff's historic residential architecture, the Ashurst House possesses significance as a distinctive local example of Victorian period, middle-class housing. Although a few other vernacular Queen Anne style dwellings exist, the Ashurst House is completely unique. Its massing, steeply pitched pyramidal roof, central chimney, offset gable, tall narrow dormer, and brick detailing combine successfully to create a truly singular statement.

The Stanfill Cottage contributes to the importance of the Ashurst House for several reasons. Since the two properties have been bought and sold as a unit through time, their ownership histories are identical. The cottage is noteworthy individually by virtue of the cast-in-place concrete construction of the original structure. The early (pre-1892) use of this construction material is unusual in Arizona. In addition, this structure is the oldest extant building on the block; indeed, it is one of the oldest structures in the entire neighborhood.

Inherent in the architectural significance of the Ashurst House is its status as an important representative of a historic local building industry. J.C. Milligan's contributions to Flagstaff's built environment are detailed above. However, it is not known precisely whatever became of Milligan or his brickyard. By about 1910 it appears that his bricks declined in popularity while bricks made in Gallup, New Mexico, were increasingly used in home and chimney construction. It has been suggested that Milligan's clay-based bricks were unsuitable for use in chimneys because they tended to deteriorate over time from intense heat. To prevent possible fire hazards, a local fire ordinance was enacted which specified that hard-fired bricks, such as those manufactured in Gallup, had to be used for chimneys (Henry Giclas, personal communication). Many structures constructed after 1910 were built of Gallup brick, such as the Fronske residence (ca. 1910), two doors east of the Ashurst House, and two large bungalows directly across the street from the Ashurst House on Park Street (built between 1910 and 1916).

It is not known whether Milligan faced competition from the use of Gallup bricks or if the Gallup brick industry filled a void left by Milligan's withdrawal from the industry. Whatever the reason, Milligan left an enduring legacy to Flagstaff in the form of his distinctive bricks and building style. The Ashurst House embodies this legacy.

SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND

An additional level of significance is ascribed to the Ashurst House for its association with a historic scientific endeavor. In September 1898, Elizabeth Renoe, widow of a Wyoming weather observer, traveled to Flagstaff with her young son and established the first official United States Weather Bureau in the region at 421 West Aspen. Although incomplete weather records had been kept by individuals prior to 1898, this was the first official U.S. Weather Bureau in northern Arizona. According to the Coconino Sun (September 10, 1898), "the establishment of the

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Flagstaff office is a step forward in the Arizona weather service and it will only be a matter of time until a forecast of the weather will be issued in nearly every state and territory. Every weather observer on the Pacific coast is interested in the work of the Flagstaff station, as it is one of the highest stations on the coast, the elevation being 6,885 feet above sea level."

Daily weather observations were recorded from instruments located on the property. Mrs. Renoe, who by 1900 owned both the cottage and house, was the weather observer until February, 1904, when she resigned to marry Henry F. Ashurst. She retained ownership, but the Weather Bureau continued operations in the house under the direction of A.E. Hackett.

The daily weather observation records kept by Mrs. Renoe/Ashurst and Mr. Hackett are now curated by the Northern Arizona University Special Collections Library and thus are available for scholarly use. At least one researcher is currently using this early Weather Bureau data for a historical study of regional climate.

The Weather Bureau operated on the property until March 9, 1912, when it was moved to the corner of Sitgreaves Street and Ellery Avenue. A new observer, George T. Herrington, then assumed responsibility for weather observations. The Weather Bureau continues in operation today at the Flagstaff airport.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Henry Fountain Ashurst, an important regional and national politician, shared ownership of the property with his wife, Elizabeth Renoe Ashurst, between 1904 and 1931. Born in Nevada in 1874, he moved with his family to northern Arizona in 1876. The senior Ashurst had local mining and ranching concerns. They were thus prominent local pioneers involved in establishing the economic and political base for Flagstaff.

Henry F. Ashurst was oratorically and politically talented. His long public career began in 1896 when, at the age of twenty-three, he was elected to the Territorial House of Representatives. He returned as Speaker of the House in 1899. By 1904, when he had finished law school at the University of Michigan, he was already an established lawyer and politician in Arizona. He married Elizabeth Renoe in Michigan on March 2, 1904. The local newspaper marked the Ashurst's return to Flagstaff in July 1904: "Attorney H.F. Ashurst, accompanied by wife and (adopted) son, were arrivals last Saturday from the east.... It is said his friends are urging him to make the race for district attorney. He may conclude to announce himself after renewing old friendships." (Coconino Sun, July 23, 1904). Indeed, he did run and was elected Coconino County District Attorney. During the years 1904-1908, when he lived at 421 West Aspen, he served two terms in that post.

Ashurst left his District Attorney post in 1908 and the following year moved his law practice to Prescott, Arizona, in Yavapai County, then the Territorial Capitol. The Ashursts retained ownership of the property until 1931 but apparently did not live there after 1908.

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When Arizona became a state in 1912, Ashurst was elected one of the first two United States Senators representing Arizona. He had a long and distinguished Senatorial career. Ashurst was re-elected four times but finally met political defeat in 1940, just one year after his wife, Elizabeth, died. Ashurst, a Democrat, began his national legislative career under the Democratic Wilson Administration. He continued in office during the Republican regimes of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. His final years in office were under the Democrat, Franklin D. Roosevlet. Ashurts's greatest influence was likely felt when his party controlled Washington, but he was a respected and admired member of the minority party. A renowned speaker, Ashurst's speeches were always well attended.

Ashurst served on a number of Senatorial committees. As a member of the Senate Committee on Reclamation, he wrestled with the complexities of Colorado River water allocation. The Colorado River Compact, a water allocation alliance among the seven Colorado River Basin states, was still in the proposal stage at that time. Ashurst was one of the first Congressional leaders to deal with this state and national issue. The issue of western water reclamation remains with us today, but Ashurst and his fellow committee members laid a firm foundation for future development. In 1925 the committee visited proposed Colorado River damsites and recommended construction of Boulder Dam. Ashurst also recommended construction of the Glen Canyon Dam, but this site was not favored by fellow committee members. Ashurst's diary chronicles a lonely journey across the vast Navajo Indian Reservation to inspect the damsite; only one other committee member accompanied him. Although his recommendation for construction of the dam was ignored at the time, Ashurst lived to see the Glen Canyon Dam approved by Washington.

Ashurst's greatest triumph came in 1937 when, as Chairman of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, he successfully defeated President Franklin Roosevelt's attempt to "pack" the Supreme Court. Exasperated at a Supreme Court reluctant to pass many New Deal laws, Roosevelt proposed a bill which would permit him to appoint a new Supreme Justice for every Justice over seventy years old that refused to retire, until the total number of Justices numbered fifteen. Roosevelt's intention was to pack the court with Justices that would pass his laws. Ashurst, who was against the bill, stalled it in committee; it was eventually sent to the Senate with an unfavorable recommendation. The bill failed, and the Judicial branch remained in its original form. Ironically, Ashurst's unbending opposition to the immensely popular Roosevelt meant his own political doom. As he predicted in his diary, Ashurt was defeated in the 1940 election.

Following his Senatorial defeat, Ashurst served on the Board of Immigration Appeals of the Department of Justice. He retired in 1943 and spent the rest of his life in Washington, D.C. until his death in 1962 at the age of 87. He is buried in the Sacred Heart Cemetery in Prescott, Arizona.

An extensive historic resource survey in Prescott did not identify any extant properties having a direct association with Senator Ashurst. The property at 421 West Aspen in Flagstaff, occupied by Ashurst in the early years of his career, therefore best represents his career in the political developments of our nation's 48th State.

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Verbal Boundary Description (Continued)

an adjacent property moved to the site in 1951. Boundaries are delineated on accompanying site map, drawn to scale of ca. 1''=30'.

