

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received **JUL 29 1983**
date entered

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

1. Name

historic The Benjamin F. Billingsley House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 202 Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Duncan N/A vicinity of

state Arizona code 04 county Greenlee code 011

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Charles O. Billingsley

street & number 312 High Street

city, town Duncan N/A vicinity of state Arizona 85534

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Greenlee County County Recorder's Office

street & number

city, town Clifton state Arizona 85533

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Greenlee County Historic Resource Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records Arizona State Historic Preservation Office

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

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY/CONTEXT:

The Billingsley House, a ca. 1900 Queen Anne style residence, is located in Duncan, Arizona. The town of Duncan is in the center of a rural, sparsely populated agricultural region of southeastern Arizona on the New Mexico border. The area is drained by the Gila River, which flows through Duncan, and much of the town is in the Gila floodplain. The Billingsley House sits on Main Street adjacent to Duncan's small commercial core. Architecturally, the house is characterized by a steeply pitched, truncated hip roof topped by wrought iron cresting, original turned posts and spindles on the porch, and original window sash. The house has been stuccoed, but the Queen Anne detailing is intact, and the house remains characteristic of Arizona's Territorial architecture. Despite some minor structural and cosmetic damage sustained in a 1978 flood, the house remains sound and retains the simple integrity of its design and setting.

Exterior:

The Billingsley House is a one story, slightly asymmetrical Queen Anne house with a steeply pitched, truncated hip roof. There is a corbelled brick chimney projecting from the south roof slope.

Although the house is not square, it has a basically rectangular plan oriented along a center hall. It measures approximately 30'x35' overall.

Ornamental cast iron cresting added after 1907 (as indicated by historic photograph dated 1907) highlights the roof. Other ornamental details remain from the initial construction. The facade which faces southeast features a two-bay recessed porch with turned wooden posts and a spindle screen. The main entrance retains an original screen door with simple spindlework and a multipaneled wood door featuring colored Queen Anne lights framing an upper glass panel.

Opposite the recessed porch is a canted, three-sided frontispiece. The window in the front bay features a Queen Anne sash window with colored lights. The other windows on the frontispiece and on all other elevations have original one-over-one sash and are set in simple wooden frames. A curvilinear cornice bracket supports the projecting soffit at the southeast corner of the house.

The side elevations are detailed by the rectangular window openings and the slight soffit overhang and box cornice of the roofline. A portion of the rear elevation is also recessed beneath the main roof, and there is a small hip-roofed ell at the southwest corner. An enclosed shed-roofed porch was added along the north side elevation ca. 1940.

Interior:

The interior, despite cosmetic damage to the flooring and base of the plaster walls sustained from a 1978 flood, remains architecturally intact with its Queen Anne features in place. Modern paneling and a dropped acoustical ceiling are present in the center hall, but there was no removal of historic fabric.

The house has a central hall with three interior doorways within the hallway itself and doors to the individual rooms opening from the hall. Each doorway has a wood frame and an operable glass transom. The transoms are opened by brass push rods.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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The front parlor with its adjoining dining room is the main interior space. The parlor is highlighted by the colored lights of the Queen Anne sash window on the facade and has original flooring, plaster, doors, woodwork, and hardware. The parlor opens into the dining room through double sliding pocket doors which are in operable condition. The dining room features a simply detailed fireplace of a Classical Revival design. Simple polished wood pilasters surround the firebox which is topped by a simple mantel and mirrored, framed overmantel. The firebox was converted for coal burning, and the remaining space was infilled with smooth river rock.

Although the house was flooded in 1940 and again in 1978, there appears to be little major structural damage resulting, and the house is essentially sound. The presence of original interior and exterior ornamentation allows the house to retain its overall architectural characteristics and integrity. Sensitive restoration could easily recover its original architectural qualities.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates ca. 1900 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SUMMARY:

The Billingsley House in Duncan, Arizona is historically significant for its association with Benjamin F. Billingsley, a prosperous dry goods merchant in Duncan from 1895 to 1940. In its local and regional context, the Billingsley House is architecturally significant as an example of domestic residential architecture built during Arizona's Territorial period in the late nineteenth century. Locally it is considered the oldest house in Duncan and is the town's primary architectural reference to Duncan's settlement at the end of the nineteenth century.

HISTORIC CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Duncan, Arizona was established in 1883 as a railroad stop on the new spur line of the New Mexico and Arizona Railroad linking Clifton, Arizona with the rail junction of the Southern Pacific Railroad at Lordsburg, New Mexico. The line traversed the fertile Gila River Valley which surrounds Duncan, and was the main impetus behind the founding of the town. With the development of copper mining in Clifton and Morenci, thirty miles to the northwest, and other mines along the southern Arizona and New Mexico border, the Gila River Valley flourished as an agricultural region due both to the ideal climate and soil for farming and the proximity to guaranteed profitable markets in the expanding mining towns. There was also extensive ranching throughout the valley.

Duncan's location in the center of the valley and on the railroad line was pivotal to the town's development, as well as to the general agricultural activity in the region. Initially, the railroad facilitated the distribution of agricultural products and livestock to the mining areas and provided a link to larger markets via the link with the Southern Pacific Railroad.

The expansion of the copper industry at the end of the nineteenth century necessitated greater agricultural production, and Duncan prospered as the mercantile supply center for agricultural equipment and feed and grain. General mining supplies were also sold in Duncan. Ultimately, Duncan's pivotal role as a commercial supply center and support facility for regional towns equaled, if not exceeded, its importance as a produce distribution center.

Benjamin F. Billingsley was among the first large scale merchants selling agricultural supplies in Duncan and is closely associated with the town's commercial development, as well as being an early settler and influential citizen in the region. Billingsley operated a major mercantile facility in Duncan. Billingsley's store opened in 1895 and carried a complete range of agricultural supplies. A 1913 advertisement in the Arizona Good Roads Association, Illustrated Road Maps, and Tour Book advertised Billingsley's as carrying "General Merchandise, Hay and Grain, Farm Machinery and Miners' Supplies". The ad cited Billingsley as "Duncan's Oldest Merchant", indicating his role in establishing Duncan's economic and commercial vitality. The business was operated by Billingsley until his death in 1940.

(See Continuation Sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less acre

Quadrangle name Duncan, AZ-NM

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

UTM References

A

1	2	6	7	7	5	7	5	3	6	2	1	7	7	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 6, SE $\frac{1}{2}$ of Lot 8, Township of Duncan.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Roger A. Brevoort, Architectural Historian

organization Arizona SHPO Office date June 1983

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

city or town Phoenix state Arizona 85007

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Dominic Schuber*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date June 29, 1983

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 8/25/83

Melrose Bryan
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Billingsley emigrated to southern Arizona from Tennessee in the late 1880's. Initially he supervised the cattle on the H. C. Day Ranch outside Duncan from 1887 to 1895. He moved into Duncan in 1895 when he opened his business and built his house ca. 1900, having acquired several parcels of land in the town center, the first in 1897. The house was built sometime after that, perhaps as late as 1904, based on property deeds retained by the Billingsley family.

After Billingsley's death, family members occupied the house continually until 1978 when a major flood of the Gila River inundated the house and caused some interior damage. The house is now owned by a grandson, Charles O. Billingsley. The Billingsley family, with support from local residents, would like to restore the house for a local museum.

B. F. Billingsley also played a contributing role in local county politics. He served on the Graham County Board of Supervisors from January 1905 to December 1906. In 1907 Graham County was divided, resulting in the formation of Greenlee County, which encompassed the Gila River Valley, the Clifton-Morenci mining district to the north, and a large region of upland ranches in the Blue Mountains along the New Mexican border. Billingsley served on Greenlee County's first Board of Supervisors from January 1909 until December 1911. In this role he was associated with the construction of the original Greenlee County Courthouse in Clifton, built in 1912, and played a role in negotiating the legal and financial settlements between the two counties.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Architecturally, the Billingsley House illustrates Arizona's Territorial architecture. In the late nineteenth century, with the arrival of the railroad and new eastern immigrants, architecture in Arizona's outlying regions gradually shifted from Spanish-inspired adobe forms to vernacular interpretations of Anglo-inspired Victorian styles. The more eastern forms and materials allowed Territorial settlers to create a familiar environment within the unfamiliar western landscape.

The Billingsley House, erected ca. 1900, is a simple Queen Anne style brick building (later stuccoed ca. 1940) with typical Victorian-period detailing such as the turned porch columns and spindle screen and the Queen Anne sash windows. This ornamentation would have been imported by the railroad. Similar houses dating from the turn of the century are found throughout the state, primarily where the railroad allowed the importation of building materials.

In southeastern Arizona this was possible after the Southern Pacific Railroad opened across southern Arizona in 1880. The Arizona and New Mexico Railroad spur line to Clifton was completed in 1884. As the areas prospered in the following two decades, more sophisticated and permanent residences appeared in the larger towns. In its local context, the Billingsley House clearly evidences this trend in Duncan, and today it is the major and most intact example of Territorial architecture there. Its substantial character and stylistic sophistication also make an architectural statement about Billingsley's status in the community.

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In its regional context, the Billingsley House is similar to the higher class domestic architecture of Clifton, where the mining prosperity fostered development of a large residential district of Queen Anne architecture from the turn of the century. Clifton is now the only historic community of any size in Greenlee County.

SITE INTEGRITY:

The Billingsley House today stands as an important local landmark in Duncan. The site still has some original landscape features, and the house is being maintained while the owners consider options for possible restoration.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arizona Good Roads Association, Arizona Good Roads Association Illustrated Road Maps and Tour Book, Prescott, 1913, reprinted by Arizona Department of Transportation through Arizona Highways Magazine Division, Phoenix, 1976.

Duncan and Vicinity, The Arizona Bulletin, Safford, AZ, New Years Edition, 1899.

Historical data provided by Mrs. Robin Billingsley, Duncan, AZ, 1979-1983.

Vertical file materials on Duncan at Arizona Department of Library and Archives, Phoenix, AZ. (Included several newspaper clippings of assorted dates, 1899-1939 inclusive.)