NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

C. L. and Bessie G. McGhee House
Franklinton, Franklin County, FK0548, Listed 9/5/2007
Nomination by Nancy Van Dolsen
Photographs by Nancy Van Dolsen, January 2006

Façade view

Rear view
Name of Property

McGhee, C. L. and Bessie G., House

Location

103 West Mason Street
Franklinton
North Carolina
Franklin
27525

State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _X___ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide  X locally. ( ___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official                     Date

_North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

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): _________________  

__________________________________  ______________________ _________
Signature of Keeper  Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

X private
    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

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Contributing</th>
<th>Noncontributing</th>
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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register  N/A
Name of related multiple property listing  N/A
6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling
Domestic Secondary Structure

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling
Domestic Secondary Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Colonial Revival
Other: Arts and Crafts
Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
- foundation: BRICK
- roof: STONE/slate
- walls: WOOD/weatherboard
- other

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

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.
X 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1911
Significant Dates N/A
Significant Person N/A
Cultural Affiliation N/A
Architect/Builder Keller, H. P. S., architect

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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

X State Historic Preservation Office
   Other State agency
   Federal agency
   Local government
   University
   Other

Name of repository: ___________________________________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.913 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)
   Zone Easting Northing  Zone Easting Northing
   1 17 728700 3998240  3  __ ______ ______
   2 __ ______ ______  4 __ ______ ______
   See continuation sheet.

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nancy Van Dolsen date 26 April 2007
street & number 1601 Highland Drive
city or town Wilson state NC zip code 27893
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  Dr. and Mrs. Phillip Meador
street & number  103 West Mason Street  city or town  Franklinton  state  NC  zip code  27525
Narrative Description

The Claude L. and Bessie G. McGhee House sits on a lot on the southwest corner of Mason and Hillsborough streets, one block west of the downtown area of Franklinton, North Carolina. The house is set back approximately eighty feet from the street and sits on a lot of slightly less than one acre. The house sits on a rise, slightly above the street, but the land then falls off towards the rear of the house. A low curved concrete wall separates the lawn from the sidewalk, and two concrete steps lead from the sidewalk to the poured concrete walk leading up to the front steps of the house. A dirt driveway skirts the house on the west elevation and leads to a small frame ca. 1920 outbuilding behind the house. The simply-constructed outbuilding contributes to the historic setting of the house. Sunken depressions in the yard close to the street mark the former location of an ice house (which does not appear on the 1925 Sanborn map of the property). Originally the land was terraced to the east of the house with a low embankment approximately even with the façade of the house. Two stone steps drop down to the lower level of the yard. Cedars are found along the west property line, and some large deciduous trees are located on the front lawn. Shrubs (some of them dating to the first half of the twentieth century) are located east of the house.

House, ca. 1911, contributing

The C. L. and Bessie G. McGhee House is a blend of the Arts and Crafts and Colonial Revival styles, both inside and out. The one-and-a-half-story, three-bay, double-pile, frame, weatherboarded house stands on a full brick foundation and has a steeply-pitched hip roof. Two brick interior chimneys rise from the peak of the hip roof. Two brick interior chimneys rise from the peak of the hip roof. Two gable-front dormers are located on the façade and are sheathed with wood shingles. The dormers are supported by paired console brackets. A curved bargeboard highlights the dormers and links the two together. Paired windows are located in each dormer and they contain sixteen-light over one-light sash windows. A louvred lunette is located under the gable peak of each front dormer. The dormer on the west side of the house has a half-hip roof with a balcony; the dormer is shingled, including the shingled porch posts. The gable-front dormer on the rear elevation features two nine-over-one-light sash windows each crowned with a fixed nine-light window; these windows are all incorporated into one surround. The gable-front dormer on the east side of the house is also shingled and has two twelve-light over one-light sash windows. Metal finials are located at the top of each dormer.

A one-story hip-roof porch wraps around the façade and east elevation and terminates on the east elevation at a one-story frame, weatherboarded addition built onto the rear of the house in 2005. The one-room addition was designed by Raleigh architect Gerald Traub. The porch has a simple wood balustrade with square balusters; the porch roof (now sheathed in copper) is supported by paired columns flanking the central entrance and six single columns, and it has a low central pediment. Three concrete steps lead up to the wood floor of the porch on the façade, and four wood steps lead up to the porch on the west elevation. The central entrance to the house is comprised of a central door flanked by sidelights and transom featuring leaded glass. A tripartite bay window with nine-over-one light sash windows is located to the east of the front door and a single nine-over-one light sash window is to the west.
The first story of the west elevation features a nine-over-one light window at the north end, an original one-bay extension with windows at a higher height (this is the bath) under the second-floor balcony, and a six-over-one light sash window and door on the south end that leads into an enclosed rear porch (that was enclosed by 1925). The brick foundation is exposed on the rear of the building due to the slope of the land. At the rear of the first floor level, a set of eight metal steps with a small landing leads to the enclosed back porch and an adjacent original pantry area. The enclosed back porch has a bank of seven nine-over-nine light sash windows. The rear of the new addition is set back from the pantry area and has two nine-over-one light sash windows sent into one surround; a double door leads into the basement area.

The east elevation includes a two-bay section of the new addition with two sets of windows identical to that found on the rear elevation. The main block of the house has an ornate leaded glass window set high in the wall at the south end, and a tripartite bay that includes two nine-over-one light sash windows flanking a blank central wall (the location of the fireplace).

The house has a basement that has exposed brick walls and brick piers. The floor of the basement is covered with gravel and the first-floor floor joists are left exposed.

The double-pile plan of the house features a central passage flanked by two rooms. The front half of the passage serves as an entry hall, with a corner fireplace. The house has narrow hard wood floors throughout the first and second floor. The door and window moldings on the first floor feature molded casings flanking the opening with a simple board capped with a thin band of molding at the top. The doors throughout the house feature six horizontal panels.

The fireplace opening in the entry hall is sheathed in glossy green tiles and a cast metal, Arts and Crafts style insert covers the opening. Matching tiles cover the hearth. The mantel and metal insert have bosses, and the mantel has a very small shelf. Above the mantel is a portrait of Bessie Green McGhee as a young woman. The room has its original wallpaper by M. H. Birge Company of Buffalo, New York. The paper has a high wall paper dado with an Arts and Crafts design, and a plain field above. Both papers are made to appear as if they are leather or vellum. The plaster ceiling is coffered with a central lighting fixture. The Arts and Crafts style chair, desk, and umbrella stand are original to the room. The double-width opening at the rear of the entry leads to the stair passage. The stair features heavy square newels with square balusters. The stair has two landings that are lit by the dormer on the rear elevation of the house. The room contains a Arts and Crafts-style bench original to the house and the rolltop desk that was first owned by the W. L. McGhee, C. L. McGhee’s father, and which was located in the McGhee Store.

The parlor is located to the left of the entry and also features original Birge Company wallpaper and a coffered ceiling. A corner fireplace with an Arts and Crafts mantel that features a mirrored overmantel and large brackets, which originally had light fixtures, dominates the room. This room also contains original furnishings, and an original light fixture at the center of the ceiling.
The dining room is located to the rear of the parlor, and has original Birge wallpaper and a coffered ceiling. A fireplace is located on the east wall and features an Arts and Crafts surround with a leaded-glass overmantel. The white tiles surround a metal insert that features a neoclassical image of a woman; the identical insert is found in the first-floor bedroom across the passage. The pattern of the leaded glass in the overmantel matches that found in the window above an original buffet located in the room. All of the furniture—the table, buffet, chairs, and cabinet—is original to the room. The room has a plate rail, with a plain Birge wallpaper made to resemble leather or vellum below the rail and a different Birge wallpaper—one with an Arts and Crafts narrow stripe alternating with the leather or vellum pattern—above the rail.

The door on the rear wall of the dining room leads into a small butler’s pantry with original cabinets. The door on the south wall of the butler’s pantry leads into the kitchen, which contains an original hutch. The kitchen has a new tile floor and plaster walls. A large opening was made in the east wall of the kitchen into the new addition, a large sunroom. A door on the west wall of the kitchen leads to the enclosed porch on the rear of the house.

On the west side of the entry and stairpassage are two bedrooms which have plaster walls and ceilings, separated by a small room that contains a closet and which provides access to the bathroom located below the balcony. Both of these rooms have mantels which are Colonial Revival in feeling and feature full columns supporting a mantel shelf. The fireplace openings contain metal inserts with the image of a neoclassical woman. The rear bedroom leads into a small dressing room with built-in cabinets. The dressing room leads into the enclosed rear porch.

Upstairs, there are two bedrooms at the front of the house, each with a fireplace. The wood floors on the second floor are pine. The bedrooms have Colonial Revival mantels similar to the ones in the bedrooms on the first floor. At the top of the stairs to the right is the plunder room, lit by the dormer on the east wall of the house. At the top of the stairs to the left, during the restoration of 2005, a small bathroom was created in a former storage area.

Outbuilding, ca. 1920, contributing

The frame outbuilding consists of a central gable-front section with an open central bay, an open side shed-roof bay on the west elevation, and a smaller enclosed shed-roof addition on the east elevation. The building is sheathed in weatherboards and has a metal roof. The main block and west wing stand on a brick foundation; east addition stands on brick piers. The original use of the building is not known.
Summary

The C. L. and Bessie G. McGhee House in Franklinton, Franklin County, North Carolina meets National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture for its eclectic expression of the Arts and Crafts and Colonial Revival styles and its remarkable exterior and interior integrity. Built for Claude Lemuel and Bessie Green McGhee in 1911 and designed by Raleigh architect Harry P. S. Keller, the house still retains its original M. H. Birge Company wallpapers in three of its rooms, as well as all of its fireplace surrounds, metal inserts, Arts and Crafts and Colonial Revival-style woodwork, coffered ceilings, and many of its lighting fixtures. The house, now in the ownership of the McGhees’ grandson, also has three rooms of original Arts and Crafts furniture, and other pieces found throughout the house. McGhee was the co-owner and partner in the McGhee Joyner Company, a general merchandise store in town. Also on the property is a frame outbuilding which is a contributing resource. The period of significance is 1911, the year the house was constructed, and the property is of local significance.

Historical Background

The McGhee family arrived in Franklin County during the late nineteenth century. Wyatt Lemuel (W. L.) McGhee, born in Granville County in 1849, moved to Franklinton sometime before 1880 to open a general store.1 Established as Franklin Depot in 1839 and incorporated in 1842, Franklinton was one of the first towns in the state to flourish as a result of the arrival of the railroad. Small industries and mercantile establishments clustered near the railroad including the Sterling Cotton Mill, a tobacco factory, cotton gins, a sawmill, and McGhee’s store which for one year also served as a tobacco warehouse.2 Working in McGhee’s store (and living in his house) was his brother Nat and his brother-in-law, Charles Moore.3

W.L. McGhee (1849-1920) and his wife Bessie Moore McGhee had four children, Claude Lemuel (1879-1957), Annie (b. 1881), John Wheeler (b. 1884), and Susie (b. 1891). By 1900, their oldest son, Claude Lemuel, known by the family as C. L., was working in the store as a bookkeeper.4 Claude eventually went into business with his sister Annie’s husband, A. S. Joyner; the two men took over W. L. McGhee’s business, renaming the store the McGhee Joyner Company. Like many small companies during the Depression, the McGhee Joyner Company went into bankruptcy in 1933-1934.

W. L. McGhee owned many properties in Franklinton including the store and the adjoining lot where W. L. McGhee had his house (demolished) on Mason Street; he also owned the next block to

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3 Federal Manuscript Population Census, 1880.
the west which he gave to his sons, Claude and John Wheeler (known as Wheeler). W. L. McGhee had also purchased the Person farm (known as the Person-McGhee Farm, NR 1979) on which he built a large and ornate Queen Anne style house fronting the earlier Person House.5

W. L. McGhee’s two sons, Wheeler and Claude, each built a house on his lot on this block of Mason Street. Wheeler built a neoclassical-style house, while Claude elected to build a house that combined elements of both the Arts and Crafts and Colonial Revival styles. Claude McGhee hired architect H. P. S. Keller of Raleigh to design the house and it was completed in 1911. Living in the house in 1920 was Claude and his wife Bessie, their three children [W. L. McGhee, II (b. 1911), Dorothy G. McGhee (b. 1913), and Carolyn B. McGhee (b. 1916)], his mother-in-law, his aunt, and a servant named Mary Winston.6 His mother and father lived with his sister, Annie McGhee Joyner, her husband and family. In 1930, only Claude, his wife, and three children lived in the house.7 In the 1940s and 1950s, the house, in addition to being the McGhee family home, served as a boarding house for teachers in the Franklinton School system.8

Claude and Bessie’s son W. L. McGhee II became a farmer and took over the family farm north of Franklinton. He began his farming career at the C. L. and Bessie McGhee House and the chicken house that he used was later moved to the Person-McGhee Farm. Dorothy B. McGhee never married and worked in Raleigh most of her adult life at Rex Hospital as Chief Medical Technologist. Upon retiring in the 1970s, she moved back to the McGhee House in Franklinton. Carolyn B. McGhee married Phillip D. Meador during World War II. Their son, Phillip D. Meador, Jr., grew up in the McGhee House and went to school in Franklinton; he was bequeathed the house by his mother and his aunt. The house was unoccupied from 1992 until 2005 and has recently been restored by Phillip and Nance Meador.

Architecture Context: Eclectic Early Twentieth-Century Houses in Franklinton, North Carolina

The C. L. and Bessie G. McGhee House was constructed in 1911, according to the plans of architect, H. P. S. Keller. Harry P. S. Keller (1869-1938) was born in the District of Columbia, the son of Samuel Prescott Keller, of Maryland. By 1900, Keller was working in Wilmington, North Carolina, as an architect and living in a boarding house.9 He first worked as a draftsman for Charles McMillen, and by 1901 he was granted the position of head of the Greensboro office for

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5 Bishir and Southern, 145.
8 Philip Meador, Interview with Nancy Van Dolsen, January 5, 2006.
McMillen. Within two years he was back in Wilmington, opening his own office. He designed a number of Colonial Revival homes in Wilmington.10

By 1904 Keller had moved to Raleigh to work for the firm of William P. Rose, and within three years, he had opened his own Raleigh office.11 Between 1907 and 1911 when he designed the McGhee House, Keller designed a building for Jerome Rosenthal, the 1911 building at North Carolina State University, a house for the superintendent for the Methodist Home, Machaven (a residence in Rocky Mount, N.C., NR 1980), an A.M.E. church in Raleigh, and remodeled a store for S. Berwanger.12 From 1911 until his death in 1938, Keller designed two more buildings at North Carolina State University, commercial buildings in Raleigh, at least five houses in Raleigh, many school buildings in eastern North Carolina, remodeled the State Supreme Court building, and served as the supervising architect for the chapel addition for Christ Church in Raleigh.13

The C. L. and Bessie G. McGhee House is a blend of the Arts and Crafts and Colonial Revival styles; most of Keller’s residential work was either neoclassical or Colonial Revival in style, making the McGhee House a bit different. The Arts and Crafts movement developed in response to the belief that industrialization was causing a decline in the appreciation and development of handcrafted items, and that handcrafted items were inherently superior to mass-produced goods. The Arts and Crafts movement, espoused in the philosophy of aestheticians William Morris and William Ruskin in Great Britain during the second half of the nineteenth century, was picked up and promoted by architects and designers in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century including Charles Eastlake, Gustav Stickley, and the Greene brothers. The Colonial Revival movement, with its celebration of an earlier aesthetic and its belief that the past was a simpler and better place, is in many ways, philosophically grounded in the same premises. Although the roots of the Colonial Revival movement can be seen by the 1850s, it gained momentum during the Centennial celebration of the United States, and continues to be popular today. To the proponents of both movements, handcrafted and older things were ‘purer’ and better to live with than the products of industrialization.

The McGhee House features a symmetrical main block which evokes the Colonial Revival appreciation for symmetry, but the one-story wraparound porch also makes the building asymmetrical; thus even the overall massing of the building combines these two aesthetics. The exterior of the house with its paired gable-front dormers with wide overhangs and covered in shingles, recessed porch across the front, heavy roof brackets, covered second-floor porch, multi-

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11 Brown file.
13 Michelle A. Michael, unpublished research from the North Carolina Manufacturers’ Record 1911-1914; Brown file; Bishir and Southern, Piedmont, 128.
McGhee, C. L. and Bessie G., House
Franklin County, N.C.

Paned lights over one-light sash, and multiple roof planes is primarily Arts and Crafts in feeling. The classical columns on the porch, and sidelights with transom over the doors have a more Colonial Revival aesthetic but the leaded glass inserts lend the door a more Arts and Crafts feeling. Inside, the first floor plan with its large entry hall with fireplace, is grounded in the Arts & Crafts tradition, as are the coffered ceilings with exposed beams, the heavy metalwork of the doors and fireplace inserts that is made to look handcrafted, the wall treatments with multiple papers with raised finishes, the tiles around the fireplaces, and the heavy, plain, wood mantels. The second floor is more Colonial Revival in feeling, with fireplace surrounds with classical columns and no heavy metalwork.

The wallpaper found throughout the public rooms of the first floor (passage, parlor, and dining room) was manufactured by the M. H. Birge Company of Buffalo, New York, and is original to the house. The Birge wallpaper company was founded in 1834, first as a dealer of wallpapers, and by the mid-nineteenth century as manufacturers of papers. The firm manufactured papers at the intermediate and upper price levels, and began in the early twentieth century to specialize in reproduction wallpapers, primarily of papers produced prior to 1850. The Birge Company also produced Art Nouveau-style papers. The Birge papers found in the McGhee House are not reproductions of early papers, but are papers that fall within the Arts and Crafts aesthetic; the papers are textured to almost appear like leather or vellum. Some of the papers feature narrow vertical patterns of geometric designs; others have jewel-like imagery with a very Art Nouveau appearance. The papers are arranged differently in the three public spaces: in the entry hall there are two papers: a dado with a plain field above; in the parlor the entire wall is one paper with a vertical pattern; and in the dining room the papers are laid with a taller dado paper that features a narrow vertical pattern with a plain field above, an Arts and Crafts practice. Remnants of the original wallpaper were found in the attic of the house.

Many pieces of furniture purchased for the house are still in the building; most of the furniture is Arts and Crafts in style. In the entry and the dining room, all of the furniture is original, as is almost all of the furnishings in the parlor. The kitchen retains an original hatch, and many of the bedrooms have at least one piece of the original furniture.

The C. L. and Bessie G. McGhee House is remarkable for its exterior and interior integrity, and for its eclectic expression of Arts and Crafts and Colonial Revival styles. Within Franklinton, other prominent residences dating from the opening decades of the twentieth century include the J. W. McGhee House next door, the Vann House and the Dr. J.H. Harris House. The Vann House (115 N. Main Street, James Salter, architect) built in 1917 is also eclectic, but combines Spanish tile and Italian Renaissance Revival style elements. The Dr. J. H. Harris House (312 East Mason Street, J.

16 For examples of interior architectural details found in American Arts and Crafts houses, including wallpapers, see Calloway and Cromley, 306-336.
H. Whitfield, architect) dates to 1904 and is a large Queen Anne style house.\(^{17}\) Most of the other early twentieth-century houses in Franklinton are smaller and have a more popular vernacular appearance.

\(^{17}\) Bishir and Southern, *Piedmont*, 145.
Bibliography


Keller, H. P. S., Drawing for Dr. Z. M. Caviness House, Cameron Park, Raleigh, N.C., 1914. North Carolina State University Library, Special Collection, MC 225, project no. 1.

Meador, Dr. Phillip and Nancy. Interview with Nancy Van Dolsen, January 5, 2006.

McGhee Family Collection, Dr. Phillip and Nancy Meador, Franklinton, North Carolina.


Verbal Boundary Description

The historic boundary is the tax parcel, 1855-97-717, http://www.co.franklin.nc.us. The property’s record number is 8938.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the house and outbuilding and provides an appropriate setting for the historic property. Two small lots were separated from the rear of the property in the 1950s and they have post-period of significance buildings standing on them.