

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

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 Old McDonald Farm
Other names/site number WN00-253

2. Location

Street & number _____ Not for publication
City or town Blair Vicinity
State Nebraska Code NE County Washington Code 177 Zip code _____

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.)

/s/ Lawrence Sommer 5/24/2001
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
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 certifying official/Title 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

Old McDonald Farm

Name of Property

Washington, Nebraska

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
4	0	Total

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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURAL / SUBSISTENCE

Animal facility, agricultural outbuilding

DOMESTIC / Single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Brick / Concrete Block

Walls Wood

Roof Asphalt

Other _____

Narrative Description

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

Old McDonald Farm

Name of Property

Washington, Nebraska

County and State

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.)

Property is:

- 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.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Agriculture

Period of Significance

1896 - 1910

Significant Dates

1896 – construction of house

1910 – construction of barn

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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 for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Old McDonald Farm

Name of Property

Washington, Nebraska

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 40

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.				3.			
2.				4.			

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 Stacy Stupka-Burda / National Register Coordinator

organization Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office date 04/17/01

street & number 1500 R Street telephone 402-471-4770

city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68501-2554

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/title The James Company, c/o Bill Kerrey

street & number 668 N 57 Avenue telephone 402-250-6020

city or town Omaha state NE zip code 68132

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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, (15 USC 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

Old McDonald Farm

Name of Property

Washington County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

Introduction

The Old McDonald Farm is a late 19th century farm complex situated near the center of a 40-acre parcel on a secluded south-facing slope above Mill Creek. The surrounding landform is dissected loess hills and the setting is rural. The nomination includes 4 contributing buildings: the house, a barn, brooder shed, and a chicken coop. Mature trees on the north and east sides of the house, and a small, spring fed pond south of the house contribute to an idyllic rural setting. The buildings and landscape associated with the farm are in an excellent state of preservation.

Description

The Old McDonald Farm is located in rural Washington County, Nebraska. Washington County is bounded on the east by the Missouri River and the surrounding area is characterized by a landscape typical of a midwestern riverine environment. The Old McDonald Farm is located approximately 2 miles south of Blair, the Washington County seat, and approximately 70 miles northeast of Lincoln, the State Capitol.

This farmstead is located on a stream terrace overlooking the Mill Creek drainage. The gable and wing 1 ½ story frame house was constructed in 1896. The front entrance of this side gable roof house faces west. Double hung, two over two windows are located on either side of the front door. Upper story ½ windows were placed directly above the 1st story windows and provided ventilation for the upper floor sleeping quarters. A south facing canted bay window containing three two over two windows ensured that the front room, or parlor was well lighted. Two small bedrooms on the north side complete the floor plan of the earliest portion of the house.

Physical investigation of the house indicates that a wing was added sometime after initial construction of the side gable structure described above. The wing addition, placed perpendicular to the original dwelling transformed the residence into a T shaped structure. The addition appears rather seamless and was undoubtedly added shortly after completion of the initial dwelling. The house is clad in lapboard siding, and outside entrances present on both the north and south sides of the wing addition and provided access to a large kitchen. Two small rooms along the east side of the kitchen served as a bathing room and a storage room. A pipe from the cast iron tub combined with a small hole in the floor of the bathing room allowed the tub to drain outside. This feature was probably added at the same time as the addition, and constitutes the only "plumbing" enjoyed by the McDonald family.

A hand dug, brick lined cistern used to collect rainwater was placed outside, near the north door of the kitchen. On the opposite side, near the south door of the kitchen, a brick lined well, also excavated by hand, provided ready access to well water. Due to safety concerns, both of these subterranean features have been cleaned out and filled in by the current property owners. The house is currently being rehabilitated to include electricity and modern plumbing.

Current property owners have recently replaced the foundation of the house, which was failing, using concrete block. However, in order to be sensitive to the historic feel and appearance of the property, red brick, the material type of the original foundation, complete the upper courses of the foundation. Asphalt shingles cover the roof.

A small gambrel roof barn is located west of the house. The barn has large double doors and barn hay mow doors which face east. The barn is clad in horizontal board and batten siding, and the roof is covered with corrugated tin. Windows consist of fixed pane two over two windows. A gabled wooden cupola positioned in the center of the roof provides ventilation. The wooden cupola is topped with a lightning rod. On the interior, the livestock stalls have been removed and the interior of the barn is open.

A shed roof brooder house built on skids is located immediately west of the barn. This building has been moved around the farmstead over the years, presumably to maintain the health, cleanliness, and safety of the animals. The wire

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Old McDonald Farm

Name of Property

Washington County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

mesh that would have covered the window openings is now absent though overall the structure retains a great deal of physical integrity.

A south facing chicken coop constructed wide board planking is situated northeast of the house. Like the brooder house, this chicken coop has a shed roof and the window openings of this building have lost their wire mesh.

Washington County is rapidly succumbing to urban growth associated with the nearby City of Omaha. This collection of late 19th century farm buildings and associated acreage, besides having excellent integrity in their own right, are also an increasingly rare historic property in Washington County.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Old McDonald Farm

Name of Property

Washington County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

The Old McDonald Farm is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion A. This farmstead is associated with the broad pattern of agricultural development in Washington County, and illustrates a typical historic farmstead in Washington County. The period of significance for this farmstead is 1896 – 1910, beginning with the construction of the house, ending with the completion of the barn in 1910.

History

John A. McDonald was born in Oskaloosa, Iowa in 1856. He and his parents traveled to Nebraska Territory when John was six months old. They eventually settled near Ft. Calhoun in what would later be known as Washington County, Nebraska. John was the oldest child of 10 children and was the first student at the Long Creek School, District #8 (NeHBS: WN00-53), a property listed in the National Register in 2000.

John married in 1885, and he and his wife Anna settled on a 40-acre parcel in Washington County. They lived in a dugout until 1896 when they built the frame house described in this nomination. The dugout was located in the hillside north of the house. In addition to the dugout, additional outbuildings once present at this farmstead, such as the privy, are no longer extant. No physical remnants such as depressions or additional foundations were visible during visits to this site. The barn included in this nomination was constructed in 1910. The McDonalds raised eleven children on this farmstead and raised alfalfa, wheat, corn and oats in rotation. According to his daughter Mrytle (interview with Bill Kerrey 2000), he preferred to grow just enough to feed his stock, which included chicken, hogs, cattle, milk cows and horses. Mrs. McDonald traded eggs, cream and churned butter for goods in the nearby town of Blair.

In addition to farming, Mr. McDonald operated a threshing business in and around Washington County. This threshing business, which he operated for 45 years, saw the shift from horse powered, to steam powered threshing machinery. Throughout their lives, the McDonald's kept diaries of their day-to-day life. This is evidenced by a small notebook found in the house during recent renovations. This notebook, spanning the years 1890 – 1893, kept track of day-to-day business transactions, noted weather and visitors to the farmstead, and any other unusual events on the farm.

While McDonald was undoubtedly an astute businessman, he and his wife also encouraged and participated in artistic endeavors. Every family member played at least one musical instrument, including bagpipes, violin, organ, guitar, banjo, accordion, ukulele, mandolin and flute. Known quite simply as "The McDonalds", the family entertained their neighbors at various barn dances and house parties. The completion of the barn included in this nomination was celebrated by a barn dance at which a small piano was hoisted up to the hayloft.

Mr. McDonald was also known throughout Washington County as the "Pioneer Poet" and he penned many poems throughout his life. Several poems were published by the local newspaper, and were often reflective, as one remembered by his daughter "How different it is in Nebraska today / than what it used to be / When I was but a little boy / sitting upon my mother's knee."

John and Anna McDonald lived on this farmstead until their deaths in 1939 and 1940 respectively. The farm remained unchanged under the ownership of family members until 1999 when it was acquired by the current property owners. The current property owners are in the process of rehabilitating this property and are preparing it for future use. This rehabilitation is being performed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and in consultation with the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Old McDonald Farm

Name of Property

Washington County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

Historical Significance

In its current configuration, the house located on the Old McDonald Farm does not represent an identifiable architectural style. Based on its physical appearance, the house was constructed in two major episodes. The bay window was a later addition, perhaps put in place at the same time the wing was added to the original frame structure. Again, based on physical investigation and family history, these alterations fall within the period of significance 1896 – 1910. However, for the reasons outlined here, the Old McDonald Farm does not embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction necessary to nominate this property under Criterion C.

The dugout constructed by the McDonalds upon initial settlement of this farmstead is no longer visible in the hillside. Likewise, evidence of associated outbuildings that are no longer extant (such as a privy) were not noted during site visits. It is likely that archeological deposits are present at this farmstead. However, no archeological investigations were conducted and the nature of the potential archeological deposits was not evaluated. At this writing, whether or not these potential archeological deposits are likely to yield important information in history is unknown. Therefore, this property cannot be nominated under Criterion D.

The Old McDonald Farm is significant at the local level under *Criterion A*. The farm is an excellent collection of buildings representative of an historically significant pattern of agricultural development in Washington County. The farmhouse, associated outbuildings and agricultural acreage retain a significant amount of physical integrity. The rural setting is intact and strengthens the feeling and association of a 19th century farmstead.

The house and outbuildings included in this nomination represent the ideal of a family farm. The McDonalds were somewhat unusual in that their farming was of a smaller scale than most. However, the forty acres the McDonald family lived on and the buildings and livestock they supported represent a quality and method of agriculture now rare, certainly at the local level and increasingly at the regional level. The McDonalds were able to support themselves and their livestock, and to generate enough cash from their products (Mrs. McDonald's local trading) to provide a decent standard of living. Mr. McDonald's threshing business assisted these endeavors, but he and his family primarily identified themselves as farmers.

In the 2000 census, for the first time in American history "farming" was not listed as a possible occupation. Less than two percent of Americans now engage in farming for a living. This small collection of buildings and farm ground built and worked by the McDonalds represent a once ubiquitous and now rare piece of American culture: the family farm.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Old McDonald Farm

Name of Property

Washington County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 9 Page 1

Blair Enterprise, Blair, Ne.

Washington County Historical Association

1980 Washington County Nebraska History. Washington County Historical Association, Fort Calhoun, Ne.

Unpublished Interview

2000 Myrtle McDonald Olson, interview by Bill Kerrey, June 2000. Held by Bill Kerrey, Omaha, Ne.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Old McDonald Farm

Name of Property

Washington County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Old McDonald Farm include the 40 acres originally acquired by John A. McDonald.



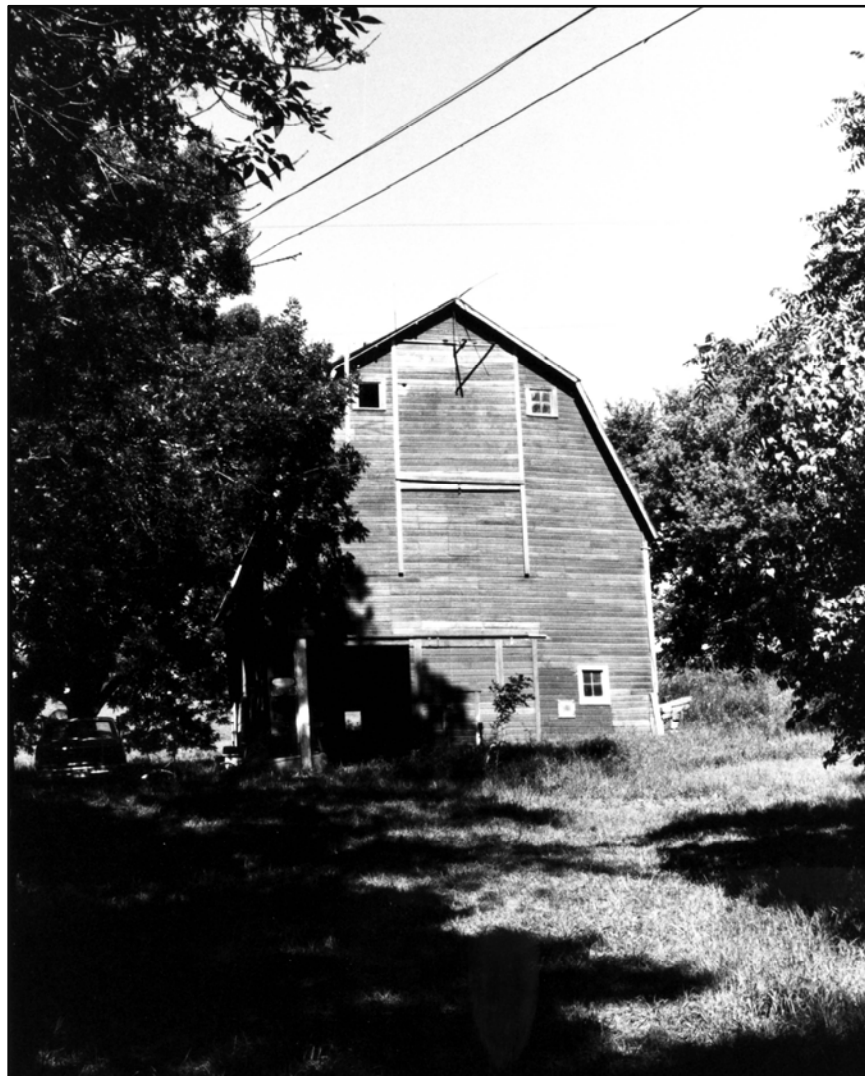
Farmhouse, looking east – photo by Jill Ebers, June 2000, NSHS (0006/2:31)



Farmhouse – Photo by Jill Ebers, June 2000, NSHS (0006/3:3)



Barn – Photo by Jill Ebers, June 2000, NSHS (0006/3:9)

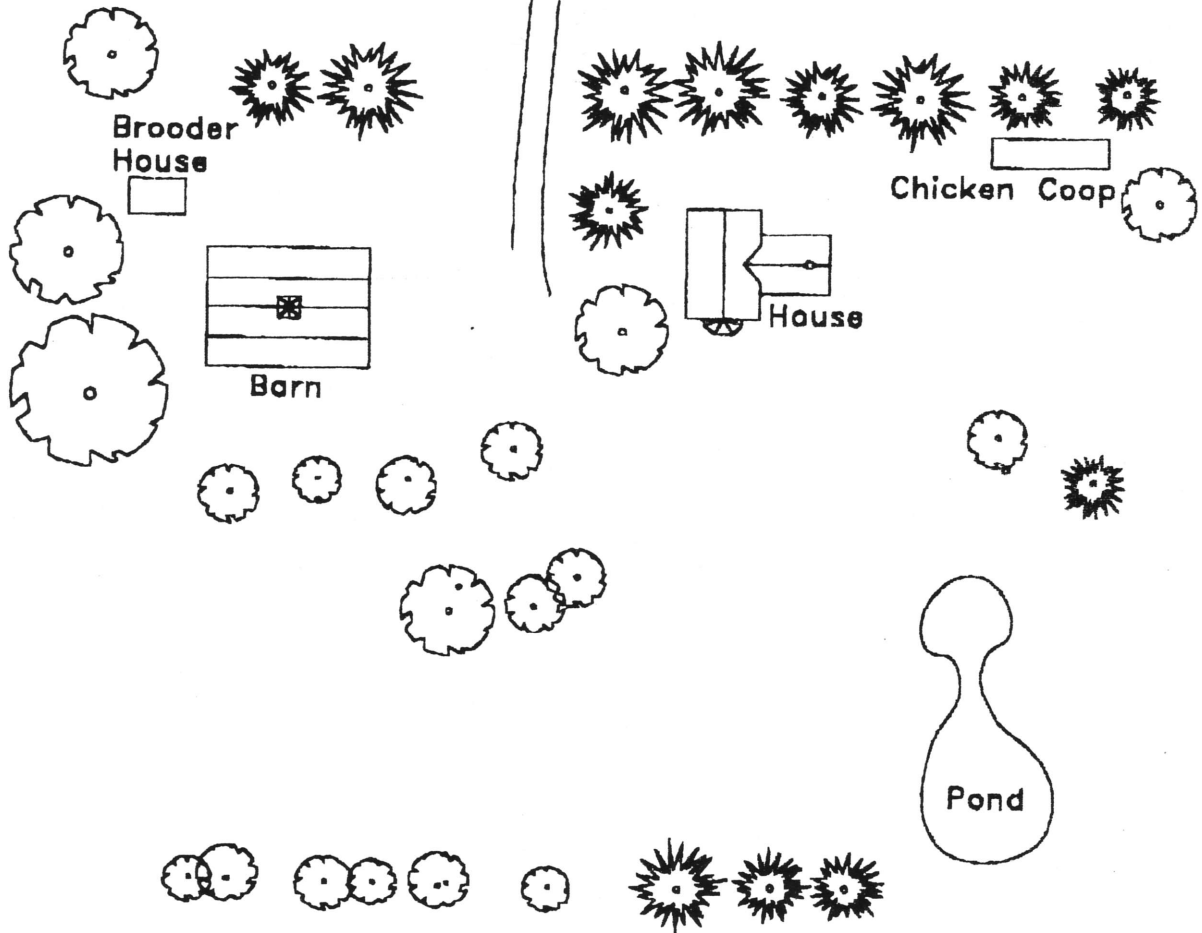


Barn – Photo by Jill Ebers, June 2000, NSHS (0006/3:6)



Chicken coop – photo by Jill Ebers, June 2000, NSHS (0006/3:2)

County Road



Old McDonald Farm
Washington County, Nebraska
NeHBS WN00-253

N
↑
Not to scale
↓