

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received SEP 30 1982
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Charles D. McLaughlin House
and/or common McLaughlin-Bruce-Best House (D009:15-30)

2. Location

street & number 507 South 38th Street N/A not for publication
city, town Omaha N/A vicinity of congressional district Second
state Nebraska code 031 county Douglas code 055

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Wilton H. and Marie O. Zinn
street & number 507 South 38th Street
city, town Omaha N/A vicinity of state Nebraska 68105

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Omaha-Douglas County Civic Center
street & number 1819 Farnam
city, town Omaha state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

A Comprehensive Plan for Historic
title Preservation in Omaha has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1981 federal state county local
depository for survey records Landmark Heritage Preservation Commission, City Planning Department
city, town Omaha state Nebraska

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The McLaughlin-Bruce-Best House is a two-and-one-half-story brick structure in the Georgian Revival style. Built in 1905 at a cost of \$19,000, the house was designed by John McDonald, Omaha architect, and constructed by local builder Walt Peterson. It is a prominent house in Omaha's Gold Coast neighborhood, the city's fashionable residential area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The exterior is unaltered, and the house is in excellent condition.

The physical description, based upon the Historic American Buildings Survey form, is as follows: light brown brick, two and one-half story structure with gable roof; main mass rectangular (40'x50') in shape with two and one-half story wing and one story lattice enclosed porch at the rear (northeast corner) elevation; one story screened porch projecting from the south elevation; inside chimney at the south wall; red tile used for roof and facing on front central dormer and rear dormer as well as on hipped roofs of porches; all eaves project and are enriched with modillions and dentils; the raking eaves of the main roof, central dormer and rear wing return at the base of the gable; at the facade and rear elevation a narrow brick molding near the top of the wall serves as an architrave, the remainder of the wall surface as a plain frieze, and the projecting eaves as a cornice to form a complete classical entablature; the facade is symmetrical about a central entry and is flanked by a large, rectangular window at each floor; two small vertical rectangular windows are centered over the entry; one square window falls between two narrower windows of equal height in the main dormer; a shallow entry portico of classical detail rests upon a simple stoop and is covered by a full entablature and parapet supported at each end by one round freestanding and one rectangular engaged smooth column, both featuring an egg and dart motif at the capital; doorway features semi-elliptical transom, rectangular sidelights and stone surround; portico, window sills and encircling watertable are all of limestone; flat, brick arches top each window opening; windows throughout the building are double-hung except for two fixed pane windows at the rear elevation whose locations correspond with the interior stair landings, and one circular window in the north gable; windows with the same detailing as the facade windows are found in symmetrical configuration on the remaining elevations. Central hall plan, open well stairway with handrail ending in a spiral supported by plain, painted balusters in place of a newell post; mahogany is used profusely throughout the main floor for the beamed ceilings of the entry, living room and dining room, as well as for the smooth, seamless wainscoting, window trim and pocket doors of the dining room, and for the treads and handrail of the main stairway; quartersawn narrow oak strip floors throughout first floor except for maple kitchen floor; quartersawn wide pine strip floors on second and third floors; fireplace in living room with glazed tile surround and hearth; simple brick fireplace in third story den with rectangular opening; marble floor replaces original quarry tile floor in the enclosed sun porch; one-story garage at northeast corner of the property.

The property has remained a single family dwelling throughout its history. The City of Omaha Landmark Heritage Preservation Commission declared the house a Landmark in 1981.

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 checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1905

Builder/Architect John McDonald, Omaha

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The McLaughlin-Bruce-Best House is architecturally significant to Omaha as a prominent product of the Georgian Revival style located in Omaha's Gold Coast area. Built in 1905 for Charles McLaughlin, the most prominent residents were Edward E. Bruce, civic leader and wholesale dealer of druggists' supplies, and Dr. R. Russell Best, a nationally known surgeon and professor of anatomy and surgery.

Charles McLaughlin, an Omaha manufacturer, built his home at 507 South 38th Street in 1905. He lived there less than five years before selling the house to Edward E. Bruce. Originally from Ottumwa, Iowa, Bruce formed a drug company there and moved to Omaha in 1885. Seven years later the wholesale drug company of Blake, Bruce, and Company, were importers of druggists' and stationers' supplies with a wholesale trade in Missouri, Kansas, South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Iowa (Savage and Bell, p. 480). Known for his involvement in civic affairs, Bruce was prominent in the Board of Trade, the Masonic Lodge, and was one of the original organizers of the Businessmen's Association. He also served on the Board of Directors of the Trans-Mississippi Exposition in 1898.

In 1937, Dr. R. Russell Best purchased the house from Elizabeth Bruce, widow of Edward. Noted for his surgical practice and research, Dr. Best taught anatomy and surgery at the University of Nebraska for over forty years. He authored more than 150 medical articles and received international recognition for his research. A native Omahan, Best received his medical degree from Harvard University in 1922 and had two years of surgical training in Europe. In 1923 he married Jane Johnson, the granddaughter of pioneer Omahan Byron Reed, who achieved great prominence and wealth.

During World War II Dr. Best served as a colonel in the Medical Corps in Africa and Italy. The French government awarded him the Legion of Merit for his service. After the war he was senior surgical consultant to the Veteran's Administration Hospitals in the Midwest. Among his many contributions to Omaha was his aid in founding the Red Cross blood service and the civil defense and disaster program.

Mrs. Augusta Marie Dixon purchased the house in 1945. She was the widow of Ephraim Dixon, president of the Orchard and Wilhelm Furniture Company. Her father, Dr. Victor H. Coffman, was a well-known physician and pioneer Omahan who moved to the city shortly after the Civil War. Mrs. Dixon was active in civic affairs including acting as president of the Duchesne Alumnae Association.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Omaha North, Nebr.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	1 5 2 5 1 3 0 1 0 4 5 7 1 1 6 1 0	B	
	Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing
C		D	
E		F	
G		H	

Verbal boundary description and justification

The south 87 feet of Lot 2, Block 2 in West Omaha Addition to the City of Omaha as surveyed, platted, and recorded in Douglas County, Nebraska. The historic acreage of the property.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state	N/A	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Penelope Chatfield Sodhi, Preservation Historian
Lynn Meyer, Preservation Administrator

organization Nebraska State Historical Society
Omaha City Planning Department date July, 1982

street & number 1500 R Street 1819 Farnam telephone 402/471-3850
Lincoln

city or town Omaha state Nebraska

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Martin W. Knott 9/17/82

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date

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

Bill Groover date 11/8/82
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The four decades from 1880 to 1920 were the golden era of Omaha, an era when a frontier city came of age and the rough exterior of the Eighties gave way to the more mature city of the 1920's. Much of this transformation came about under the direction of a group of men who can be classed under no other title but capitalists. Under their direction, Omaha expanded west, north, and south between 1880 and 1920, a movement which caused residential areas to shift. South Tenth Street and the area surrounding Capitol Hill at 20th and Dodge streets were desirable residential areas in the 1880's, but ten years later, residents began to move their homes west to an area referred to as the West Farnam District. From 1900 to 1910 any person who expected to fit in with Omaha society built his home in the district, which eventually became known as the "Gold Coast," because so many of the capitalists in the city resided there. The neighborhood was the home of the "heavy respectables," Omaha's cultural and financial leaders.

The subtle, restrained dignity that architect John McDonald masterfully brought to his design for the 1905 McLaughlin House makes it a fine example of the Georgian Revival style of architecture, a style motivated by the desire to restore order and discipline to the architectural scene. McDonald and others working in this style from the 1880's through 1920 were influenced by the simple and puritanical buildings of America's early years. The strict symmetry of the facade, the classically detailed entry portico and eaves, the gable roof with central dormer and the double-hung windows in rectangular openings are important elements of the style present in the house. Equally important is the simple, understated interior, where the architect has emphasized the richness of the materials through his use of minimal detail.

The severe front facade exhibits a simplified product of the Georgian Revival, however the structure is enlivened by the classical elements in the prominent gabled and shingled central dormer with modillioned cornice and returns, and in the rear with an asymmetrical gabled extension, shingled dormer, and prominent modillioned cornice. The McLaughlin House represents through its form, unity, and sobriety a severe product of the Georgian Revival, but is enlivened by classical elements not commonly used in the style, creating a somewhat transitional structure.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

John McDonald (1861-1956) was one of Omaha's prominent architects who began practicing in the city in the boom years of the 1880's and continued for many decades. McDonald developed a successful Omaha firm with the help of major commissions from the city's prominent families. Most notable of these, the George A. Joslyn family commissioned John McDonald over a period of thirty years to design several varied structures including their residence, the Joslyn Castle (1903, NRHP), the First Unitarian Church (1917, NRHP) of which George and Sarah Joslyn were major supporters, and the Joslyn Memorial Art Museum (1928). All of these buildings were constructed during an era (1900-29) characterized by great prosperity, a vast business boom and, in general, an optimistic outlook on the future.

In 1916 John McDonald's son, Alan (1891-1947), had become a principal in the firm and over the next thirty-one years, they designed many of Omaha's landmark structures: the Standard Oil Building (NRHP), Yates School, Fontenelle Home, Child Savings Institute, Dundee Theater, Elks Club, Benson High School, and the residences of Max Miller, Grant McFayden, and Dr. Clyde Reeder.

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