

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FEB 01 1993

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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 an 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 Early, John and Elizabeth McMurn, House

other names/site number John Early House; Early House; 76N-29W-11

2. Location

street & number 0.5 mile S. of Co. Rd. G31, between P53 & P57,  not for publication  
on unnamed road

city or town Earlham  vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Madison code 121 zip code 50072

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

David Cross 1/22/93  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historical Society of Iowa  
State of 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 the 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): \_\_\_\_\_

fn Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Antoinette P. Lee 2/18/93

John Early House  
Name of Property

Madison County, IA  
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	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Legacy in Stone: The Settlement of  
Madison County, Iowa

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

walls Limestone

roof Asphalt

other Wood

**Narrative Description**

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

See attached.

**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 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/Settlement

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

c. 1865

**Significant Dates**

c. 1865

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

John Early House  
Name of Property

Madison County, IA  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre.

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

15	4	0	3	2	1	5
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4	8	5	2	4	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

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 Tracy A. Cuning with assistance from Roslea Johnson

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 25 September 1992

street & number P. O. Box 1093 telephone 602/968-0615

city or town Tempe state Arizona zip code 85280

#### 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Jim R. Smith

street & number Rural Route 1, Box 215 telephone 515/462-2129

city or town Earlham state Iowa zip code 50072

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine 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 (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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John and Elizabeth McMurn Early House  
name of property  
Madison County, Iowa  
county and State

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Physical Description

The John and Elizabeth McMurn Early House (c. 1865) is an early vernacular limestone farm residence. It is one of several extant asymmetrical massed rectangle houses with an off-center gablefront entrance and a raised basement. Other notable features include orientation toward an attractive view and an interior stone chimney at the peak of the north gable. The plan of the house is similar to that used frequently by David Harris, but the coursing of the stone work suggests that he did not build the house or at least did not build all of it.

The Early House is situated on a low hill away from the road, with a view across a valley and other hills to the north, and across rolling fields to the east. The 1 1/2 story house is 3 x 3 bays, measuring 28 x 36 feet. It is constructed of locally quarried limestone and has a gable roof with asphalt shingles. The left-bay front entry on the north gable end is sheltered by a 1 bay, shed-roofed porch with turned posts and simple valance; these Queen Anne characteristics identify the porch as a later addition to the house. Like its northern counterpart, the south gable end has a door in the east bay and windows in the center and west bays. A new 1 story enclosed porch covers the south door and the window next to it. Both gable ends have two windows in the upper half story. A centered doorway flanked by two windows occupies the east side of the house; three unevenly spaced windows occupy the west, or road side of the house. Eaves are low and overhangs minimal. A metal stove pipe in the west roof slope is a recent modification.

The north public facade and the west public facade are constructed of finished cut, quarry faced limestone with grazed texturing to exaggerate the quarry face. The east and south walls are of roughcut rubble with finished cut quoins and jambs textured like the stone in the main facades. All stonework is coursed with random bond; some courses are not as level and even as others. There is a noticeable difference between the coursing of the lowest two to three feet on the north wall and the wall above it, which suggests two different stone masons; the lower courses appear to have been laid less carefully than the upper ones. Joints have been repointed. The limestone in the Early House is grey, unlike the more buff-colored limestone used in other Madison County stone buildings. Where the stone was quarried is unknown.

Door and window treatments consist of protruding sills and lintels, some of which have draft lines and texturing with the corner of a square-tipped tool. The windows are splayed and panelled with undecorated wood. Doors are recessed and their reveals faced with a single wide board at the top and sides. All glazing is 1/1 light, modern sash with aluminum storm windows. Entries have modern aluminum storm doors. Steps descending from the east side door are of surface textured cut limestone. A well with a cast iron hand pump and limestone collar lies near the north west corner of the house; another well with a cast iron hand pump lies approximately 30 meters north of the house, and the remains of a stone path to it are still visible near the house's front door.

According to the owner, the floor beams are of hand hewn oak and walnut. There is a full basement beneath the building with outside steps of squared, quarry faced limestone; inside stairs to the basement are depicted on the attached sketch map. The basement walls bear the remains of

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whitewash, and a dull grey residue possibly from smoke. A kitchen or washroom may have been located here; the smoky residue may have been left by the oil burning furnace and wood burning stove the previous owners used in winter.

The Early House has undergone several alterations throughout its existence. The most obvious is the rear porch, added in 1992. In 1979-1980 the owners replaced a brick chimney in the west roof slope with a metal stove pipe. The stone chimney for the flue within the south gable wall was removed at an unknown date. The roof was replaced in 1950 as the result of storm damage, and the southern chimney may have been removed at that time. Interior woodwork is all recent. The inside walls were once plastered with horsehair-added plaster but after a period of vacancy and neglect the plaster was ruined by moisture and finally removed c. 1973. The house was wired for electricity in 1946, and indoor plumbing was installed in 1955. Interior integrity is minimal, except that the original floor plan seems unchanged.

**Historical Background and Statement of Significance**

The John and Elizabeth McMurn Early House (c. 1865) is a good example of vernacular stone architecture from the pioneer settlement period in Madison County. The Early's were among the earliest settlers in the county, and this house is probably the second dwelling erected on their farm. It is unusual for "second generation" farm houses to have been built of stone prior to or during the Civil War in central Iowa, and a high concentration of them in Madison County constitutes an anomalous settlement pattern, one basis for the Legacy in Stone TR. As part of this anomaly, the Early House is significant under Criterion A in the Exploration/Settlement category. The Early House is also significant under Criterion C as an example of an unusual method of construction dating from a specific period of time, and as a residence built in the tradition of local stone mason, David Harris. The house is similar in plan to others built by Harris, although it cannot be directly attributed to him due to lack of definitive evidence.

John Early was a shorthorn cattle breeder and farmer from Ohio who arrived in Madison County in 1855 via Eddyville, Iowa. That year he purchased 160 acres of "raw prairie" in Jackson Township from John Gatchel, and with his wife, Elizabeth McMurn Early, established a farm.<sup>1</sup> According to their descendents the stone house was built 1863-1865.<sup>2</sup> In 1869 William and Thomas Early, his sons, were two of the largest landowners in Jackson Township; William dealt in livestock, and Thomas was a farmer. John Early was also noted as a farmer with "a good

<sup>1</sup> Mueller, Herman A., ed. History of Madison County, Iowa. Vol. 2. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1915, p. 87. Also Land Transfer Records, Madison County Courthouse, Winterset, Iowa.

<sup>2</sup> Keltner, Irene. Unpublished manuscript, dated 1977, in which she relates the visit of a granddaughter and a niece of John Early in 1958; these two women told Mrs. Keltner that the house was built 1863-1865.

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orchard."<sup>3</sup> A few apple trees still stand just east of the house.

John was a Presbyterian, and held Sunday services in his home until a church was built in the neighborhood. He was among the group who erected the first schoolhouse in the township. Early was an active Republican, and is perhaps best known for his ardent abolitionist views. He was reportedly in charge of a "station" on the underground railroad, and "it is said, had as many as five runaway slaves on his place at one time." On one occasion two pro-slavery Democrats were to address a political gathering at the Early Schoolhouse. Before the event he hosted a dinner for them in his home, to which a surprise third guest, a slave woman, was also invited. The meal was undoubtedly uncomfortable, but evidently passed without incident, and Early made quite a stir in the community.<sup>4</sup> (The house itself bears no evidence of having been a stop on the underground railroad; perhaps secret hiding places were unnecessary. The activities of John Early as a abolitionist are not connected to this house and its significance as part of the Legacy in Stone thematic resource.)

Elizabeth Early died in 1872 and John died the following year. By 1875, ownership of the house and 160 acres had passed to John's son, James Early, who also owned an adjoining 30 acres in section 10. By 1896 the original 80 acres on which this house stands were owned by Wallace Wicks, who held it until sometime after 1908. The farm passed through several hands until c. 1936 when Bruce and Hazel Kenworthy purchased it.<sup>5</sup> They held the property (but did not live here) until the present owners bought it in 1973.

The Early House is well maintained and in spite of a new back porch, has high exterior design integrity. The vernacular farm house reflects the success that the Early family gained in farming within their first ten years here. These two facts combined with a link to the David Harris building tradition, make the Early House a solid contribution to Madison County's historical and visual legacy in stone.

<sup>3</sup> Davies, J. J. History and Business Directory of Madison County, Iowa. Des Moines: Mill and Co., Printers and Publishers, 1869, p. 192 and p. 233.

<sup>4</sup> Mueller, Vol. 1, p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> Hazel Kenworthy was a niece of Charles Wicks, who owned the farm in the 1930s; Wicks was related to Wallace Wicks, who owned the farm in the late 19th century. Ralph and Irene Keltner leased or rented the farm from the Kenworthy's between 1940 and 1972, and it was Irene Keltner who recorded alterations and visits of previous owners to the house.

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**Bibliography**

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- Atlas of Madison County, Iowa. Knoxville, Iowa: Midland Map Company, 1908.
- Atlas of Madison County, Iowa. Winterset, Iowa: The Madisonian, 1912, 1918, 1925.
- Davies, J. J. History and Business Directory of Madison County, Iowa. Des Moines: Mills and Co. Printers and Publishers, 1869.
- History of Madison County, Iowa. Des Moines: Union Historical Company, 1879.
- Johnson, Roslea, and Daniel Kammerer. "Legacy in Stone: The Settlement of Madison County, Iowa." National Register of Historic Places Thematic Resources Nomination, prepared for the State Historical Society of Iowa, Historic Preservation Bureau, Des Moines, Iowa, 4 August 1987.
- Keltner, Irene. Unpublished manuscript containing historical information about the Early House, and given to the present owners, dated 1977.
- McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.
- Mueller, Herman A., ed. History of Madison County, Iowa. 2 volumes. Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1915.
- Wilkins, J. A. [Atlas of] Madison County, Iowa. [No publisher.] January, 1894.

**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:** the precise verbal boundary of the John and Elizabeth McMurn Early House is a rectangle measuring 56 feet north to south, and 38 feet east to west, and centered on the house. This area allows for a margin of 10 feet from the north and south walls, and 5 feet from the east and west walls of the structure.

**Boundary Justification:** this nomination includes only the Early House. The well and pump just east of the house are excluded because their age is unknown at this time. Outbuildings and other structures on the farmstead are excluded from the Legacy in Stone nomination because of their age and type of construction.



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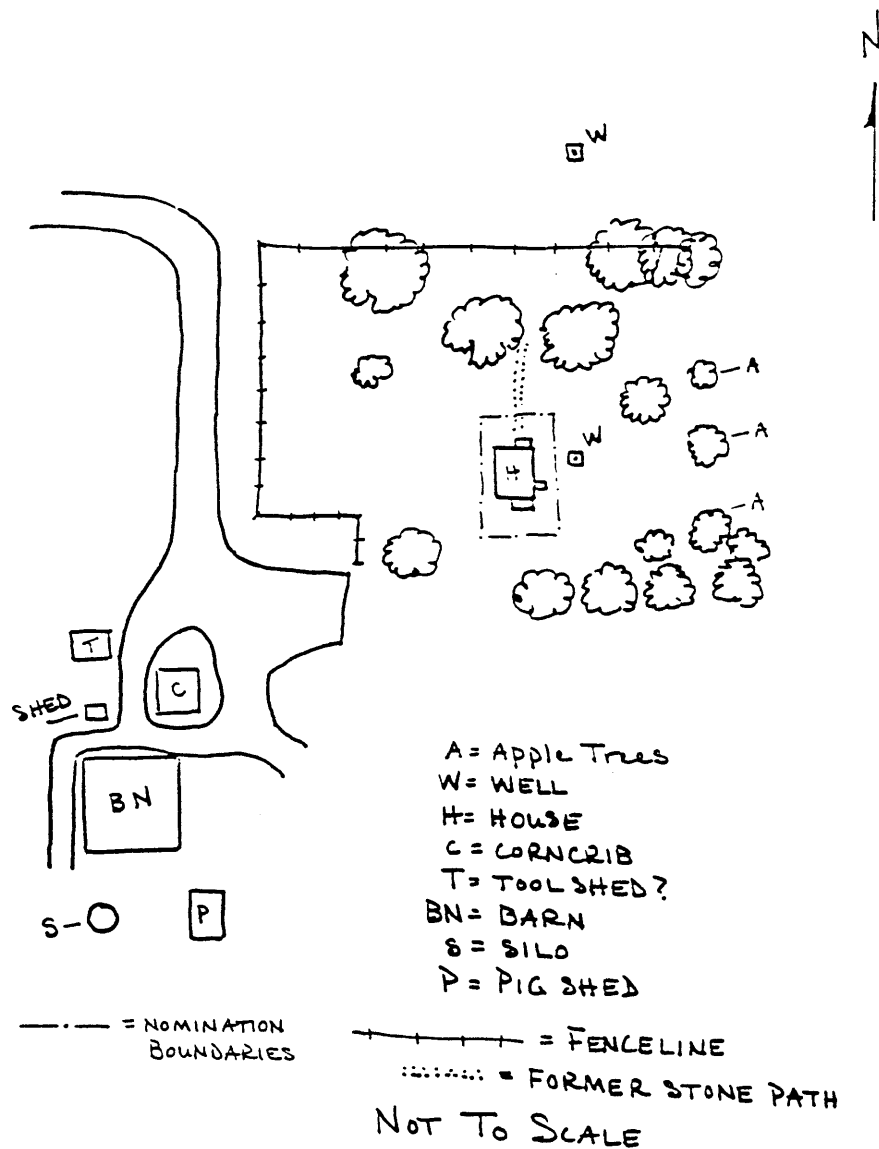
John and Elizabeth McMurn Early House  
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**Early House**

T76N-R29W, Section 11

Unnamed road, 1/2 mile south of County Road G31, between P53 and P57  
Jackson Township, Vicinity of Earlham

-- Sketch Map --



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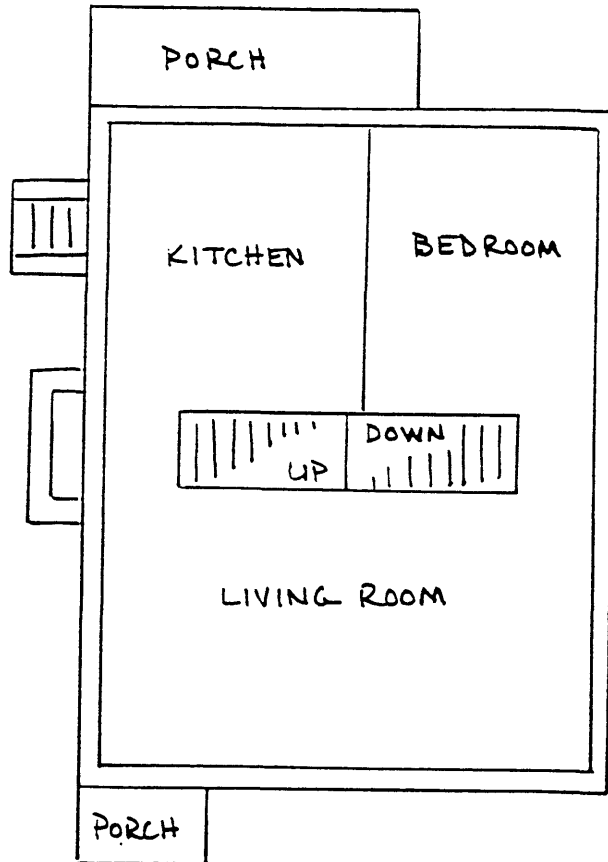
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Early House  
T76N-R29W, Section 11  
Unnamed road, 1/2 mile south of County Road G31, between P53 and P57  
Jackson Township, Vicinity of Earlham

**Ground Floor Plan**



NOT TO SCALE



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**Early House**  
T76N-R29W, Section 11  
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Jackson Township, Vicinity of Earlham

**Key to Photographs**

- 1.) North (front) and west elevations, looking SE, 3 July 1992.  
North gable front with left-bay entry and small porch.
- 2.) East elevation, looking W, 3 July 1992.  
New enclosed rear porch on south gable end. Center entry on east eaveside.
- 3.) South (rear) and west elevations, looking NE, 3 July 1992.  
South gable end with enclosed rear porch.

All photographs taken by Tracy A. Cunning.

All original negatives on file with the Historic Preservation Bureau, State Historical Society of Iowa, Capitol Complex, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.