

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

NOV 13 1991

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Conservation  
Education

Period of Significance

c.1916- 1941

Significant Dates

c.1916

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

Gilmour Beyers MacDonald (1883-1960)

Architect/Builder

Robert G. McDowell  
G. B. MacDonald

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

---

## *Section 8 Statement of Significance*

### *Summary Significance Statement*

The G.B. and Edith Craig MacDonald House is significant under National Register Criterion B for its association with G.B. MacDonald, one of the leading figures in the Conservation Movement in Iowa from the time he joined the faculty at Iowa State College (now Iowa State University) in 1910 until his death in 1960. MacDonald was the leading spokesperson for forestry and soil conservation in the prior to World War II. In Section E, his contributions are discussed in the contexts of "Forestry Conservation" (Subsection III), "Parks" (Subsection IV), and "Soil Conservation" (Subsection VI). The MacDonald House is also significant under Criterion C as an outstanding example of Craftsman architecture in Ames.

### *Criterion B*

After earning a bachelor's degree in forestry from the University of Nebraska in 1907, MacDonald worked for a time as a forester in Montana and Idaho and at the U.S.D.A. Department of Forest Extension in Washington, D.C. In 1910, he took his master's degree from the University of Nebraska and joined the department of horticulture and forestry at Iowa State College in Ames. At the time, he was the sole member of the forestry half of the department. Believing that more instructors were needed in order to train students for careers as professional foresters, he convinced the department to add instructors. By the late 1930s, the Forestry Department, of which he was chairman, had eight full-time faculty members. MacDonald also helped to launch *The Ames Forester* in 1913, a publication focusing attention on major resource conservation activities throughout the state, forestry as well as wildlife conservation and state parks. MacDonald came to Iowa several years after the Iowa Park and Forestry Association had been organized, though it did not take him long to become active in the organization and its successors, the Iowa Forestry and Conservation Association and the Iowa Conservation Association; and he served as the organization's secretary for many years.

From 1918 to 1935 he served as Deputy State Forester under the Iowa Department of Agriculture. In this capacity he worked closely with the State Board of Conservation through the 1920s, helping to regenerate woodlands on newly set aside parks and preserves. When forestry was subsumed under the new State Conservation Commission in 1935, he became State

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

---

Forester, a position he held until 1957. MacDonald also planned and developed the State Forest Nursery at Ames.

MacDonald's role in forestry conservation cannot be overstated, for he was the person most responsible for leading the state from a policy focused on tree planting to a policy focused on reforestation and forest management. During the early 1930s he directed the first systematic statewide survey of tree species and soil conditions for forestry. The survey, known as the forest and wasteland survey, was used to develop plans for federal forest reserve purchases and reforestation. MacDonald's plan, funded by the Civil Works Administration in cooperation with the State Planning Board, of which he was a member, was completed in 1934. During the same period, he served as an advisor to the consultants preparing Iowa's *Twenty-Five Year Plan for Conservation* (1933), which incorporated the early findings of his forestry survey. MacDonald also contributed to the recommendations for forestry and soil conservation embodied in the state plan. The forest and wasteland survey, however, was largely directed at federal involvement. After the state passed the National Forest Enabling Act in December of 1933, which authorized land acquisition for the purpose of establishing national forests in Iowa, the U.S. Forest Service began a modest program of land purchases. Although the federal government purchased a few thousand acres, the program eventually was turned over to the state. By the early 1940s, enough land had been acquired to establish three state forests in Iowa.

The forest and wasteland survey attracted attention among Robert Fechner's staff at Civilian Conservation Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., particularly because MacDonald saw the relation of forestry to soil erosion and farming. New Dealers snatched it up as tailor-made for the mission of the CCC. As a result, MacDonald was asked to serve as the state director of the Emergency Conservation Work program, a position which he accepted and held until 1938. As Iowa ECW director, he had jurisdiction over all Civilian Conservation Corps camps established in the state. Because of his special concerns for forestry and soil conservation, most of the CCC camps operated in Iowa were, at one time or another, assigned to reforestation or soil erosion control work. Although he never left his faculty post, the flurry of conservation work during the 1930s took much of his time.

In 1947, the University of Nebraska awarded him an honorary doctorate in agriculture in recognition of his leadership in forestry and his devotion to teaching and public service. After he retired as head of the forestry department in 1948, he was appointed to the National Forest

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 3

Advisory Council, serving until 1954. From then until 1958, he assisted the U.S. Forest Service on a project to determine access road locations. He served on the Executive Council of the Society of American Foresters for many years, and in 1948 the society elected him as a Fellow. In 1954, students and graduates of the forestry department at Iowa State College purchased a 7.5 acre tract of woodlands along the Skunk River near Ames and dedicated it to him as MacDonald Woods. The American Forestry Association honored him with an Award for Distinguished Service in Education in 1955. Iowa State College conferred a similar honor in 1958. When he died in 1960, MacDonald was remembered for his "extraordinary capacity to get things done." Although he was not a contemplative scholar, during his career he nonetheless published forty-four articles focused on the scientific management of renewable resources.

In addition to his professional life, MacDonald was also active in community affairs. He served as a lifetime elder in the Collegiate Presbyterian Church at Ames. In 1930 he received the Silver Beaver Award for his work with the Boy Scouts of America. For twenty-eight years he served on the Ames City Council, and he supported the College Y.M.C.A. throughout his life. His wife, Edith, was equally involved in community affairs. Tributes to "Professor Mac," as he was called by his students and colleagues, inevitably mention the community service he and his wife gave to Ames. As their daughter, Mary Janet, sums up these contributions -- "they were marvelous parents and community leaders."

*Criterion C*

The G.B. and Edith MacDonald House is an outstanding example of Craftsman architecture. Little is known about the architect, Robert G. McDowell, except that he located his practice in Des Moines between 1915 and 1933. The house, however, could not have been more suitably designed for a forester and his family. Set back on the lot and nestled behind an abundance of mature trees, it is the epitome of "urban woodsy." Banks of windows in the solarium and along the southern exposure flood the house with as much natural light as possible, and the massive stone fireplace in the living room seems to bring the outdoors in. Alterations made in 1969 were designed with great sensitivity toward the original design and materials, and they do not compromise the integrity of the historic fabric or design.