

McDonald Studio, Inc.

Founded: 1861

Location: Originally [301 N. Michigan Avenue ?], South Bend (1861– ); 107–109 Michigan Avenue (1875–84); 301 South Michigan Street (1884– ); 116 West Colfax Avenue (–1969); 201 North Michigan Avenue (1969–early 1980s); 326 Lincoln Way West (early 1980s– )

Albert McDonald purchased a photographic studio in South Bend in 1861. He was only nineteen years old and had just moved to the city from Grand Rapids, Michigan. (He was originally from Rochester, New York.) McDonald quickly established a high reputation as a portrait artist. By 1875 McDonald had a studio on the third floor of a building at 107–109 Michigan Avenue. Photographers at the time relied on natural light to take their photographs, often establishing their studios at the top floors of buildings in order to install skylights. McDonald, however, became one of the first photographers in the state to use flash powder. In 1884 he erected a brick building at the southwest corner of Michigan and Wayne Streets and installed what he proudly labeled a “Ground Floor Studio.”

McDonald passed the studio on to his son, Edwin McDonald. Jacob A. Rode purchased it in 1921. Rode, a Norwegian immigrant who had come to the country in 1896, had been the studio’s manager. Frank Luwen purchased the studio in 1933 and owned it for ten years; Leslie Tompsett was the owner from 1943 to 1946. In 1946 Raymond F. Patnaude, Sr., purchased the studio. Just returned from military service, Patnaude had studied photography in his hometown of Fowler, Indiana, and apprenticed at McDonald Studio. Patnaude and his wife Beulah, who worked with him, maintained the studio’s reputation for high-quality portraits. In 1958 Patnaude earned certification as

a master of photography. A fire destroyed the firm's archives of negatives in 1959. In 1969 McDonald Studio moved from 116 West Colfax Avenue, where it had been for many years, to 201 North Michigan Avenue. In the early 1980s it moved to 326 Lincoln Way West. Raymond's son David joined the studio in 1975.