

Solitude Photographs and Papers

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ca. 1960s-1980s



Title Statement

Solitude Photographs and PapersSolitude Photographs and Papers, ca. 1960s-1980s Ms.1993.024

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.1993.024

Unit Date

ca. 1960s-1980s

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

This collection contains photographs, newspaper clippings, and several other papers containing information about Solitude, the oldest building on the Virginia Tech campus in Blacksburg, Virginia.

Extent

0.3 Cubic Feet 1 box

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

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Source of Acquisition

The Solitude Photographs and Papers were donated to Special Collections and University Archives in August 1993.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Solitude Photographs and Papers completed in October 2023.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Solitude Photographs and Papers, ca. 1960s-1980s, Ms1993-024, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Historical Note

Solitude, located in Blacksburg, Virginia, served as the home of the Preston family in the 1800s. Granville Smith, uncle of Virginia Governor James Patton Preston (1774-1843), named it Solitude around 1808. Sections of the home were built as early as ca. 1802, with an expansion made ca. 1834. The home was again expanded in the 1850s by General Robert Taylor Preston (1809-1880), who had inherited the property from his father, Governor James Patton Preston. In 1872, the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Virginia Tech) Board of Visitors purchased the home and surrounding 250 acres, adding them to the central campus. Robert and his wife Mary lived in Solitude until their deaths in 1880 and 1881, respectively. The building has served in a variety of capacities since then.

Upwards of 250 African and African American people, including the McNorton, Saunders, and Fraction families, were enslaved at Smithfield, an earlier home of the Preston family, and many of them were later enslaved at Solitude. In 2019, Virginia Tech renamed the surviving outbuilding The Fraction Family House at Solitude in honor of the most numerous of the families and in honor of the contributions made by all the enslaved people forced to work on these plantations. The building is believed to have been a dwelling for enslaved people built around 1843.

Scope and Content

This collection contains photographs, newspaper clippings, and several other papers containing information about Solitude. The photographs in this collection include 34 mounted photographs showing multiple views and details of Solitude. This collection also includes a copy of Virginia Cavalcade from Autumn 1976, a publication created by Virginia Tech, and two newspaper clippings about Solitude and the Duckpond.

Related Archival Materials

See the Elizabeth Fine Papers, Ms2015-041, also at Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives. This collection contains materials related to Solitude.

Keywords

Blacksburg (Va.)

Montgomery County (Va.)

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South

Photographs

University History

Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute (1896-1944)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute (1944-1970)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (1970-)
Solitude (Blacksburg, Va. : Historic building)

Existence and Location of Copies

Some of this collection has been digitized and is available online.

Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the Solitude Photographs and Papers by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/>).

Arrangement

- **Series I: Photographs**
- **Series II: Papers**

Description of Subordinate Components

Series I: Photographs

Solitude Photographs

Unit Date ca. 1960s - 1980s

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

"Solitude": A Home of Past and Present Plate 1-14

Unit Date n. d.

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

"Solitude": A Home of Past and Present Plate 15-29

Unit Date n. d.

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

"Solitude": A Home of Past and Present Plate 30-34

Unit Date n. d.

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Series II: Papers

"A Time for Solitude"

Unit Date ca. 1960s

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Virginia Cavalcade Magazine

Unit Date 1976

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Newspaper Clippings about Solitude and the Duckpond

Unit Date 1975, 1988

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

The Appalachian Studies Program Luncheon Invitation

Unit Date 1988

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)