

# Ashelman, Polly, Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family

Polly Ashelman Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family  
1911-1913



## Title Statement

Ashelman, Polly, Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family Polly Ashelman Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family, 1911-1913 Ms.2019.017

**Author:** LM Rozema, Archivist, and Caroline Harvey, Student Worker

## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries (0434)  
560 Drillfield Drive  
Newman Library, Virginia Tech  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
Business Number: 540-231-6308  
specref@vt.edu  
URL: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu>



2019 (CC0 1.0)

## Profile Description

**Creation:** This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2024-11-14 07:13:59 -0500.

**Language Usage:** Description is written in: English, Latin script.

## Descriptive Summary

### Unit ID

Ms.2019.017

### Unit Date

1911-1913

### Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

### Abstract

The Polly Ashelman Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family, Ms 2019-017, contains items from former VPI President McBryde. Before becoming the fifth president of the university, McBryde attended South Carolina College, the University of Virginia, and served in the confederate army. McBryde received medals from South Carolina College and UVA as well as gifts during his presidency which are included in this collection.

### Extent

0.2 Cubic Feet 1 box

### Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

# Administrative Information

## Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research.

## Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

The copyright status of this collection is unknown. Copyright restrictions may apply. Contact Special Collections and University Archives for assistance in determining the use of these materials.

Reproduction or digitization of materials for personal or research use can be requested using our reproduction/digitization form: <http://bit.ly/scuareproduction>. Reproduction or digitization of materials for publication or exhibit use can be requested using our publication/exhibition form: <http://bit.ly/scuapublication>. Please contact Special Collections and University Archives ([specref@vt.edu](mailto:specref@vt.edu) or 540-231-6308) if you need assistance with forms or to submit a completed form.

## Source of Acquisition

This collection was donated to Special Collections and University Archives in April 2019.

## Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Polly Ashelman Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family was completed in May 2019.

## Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Polly Ashelman Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family, Ms2019-017, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

# Biographical Note

Known as the "father of VPI," John McLaren McBryde (January 1, 1841-March 20, 1923) was the fifth president of Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College and Polytechnic Institute (VPI, or Virginia Tech). He was born in Abbeville, South Carolina, to Susan McLaren and John McBryde, a Scottish cotton merchant. In December of 1858, John McLaren McBryde enrolled in South Carolina College (later the University of South Carolina) in Columbia, South Carolina. He later transferred to the University of Virginia in 1859, leaving in 1861 to fight in the American Civil War for the Confederacy. Having joined the military, McBryde was stationed on both Sullivan and Morris Islands, reportedly seeing the first shot fired on Fort Sumter. In 1862, McBryde contracted typhus fever and was forced to leave the army, but went on to work for the Treasury Department of the Confederate States of America in Richmond, Virginia.

Following the end of the Civil War, McBryde ran a large farm named Branchland in Charlottesville, Virginia. During this time, he published numerous articles on the subject of agriculture, gaining him the attention that eventually led to his appointment as a Professor of Agriculture and Botany at the University of Tennessee in 1879. In 1882, McBryde was offered a chair at the South Carolina College, where he remained until 1891, expanding it into a university after becoming president. In 1891, South Carolina University was again reduced to a college and its agricultural department moved to Clemson, leading to McBryde's acceptance of the Presidency at the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (VAMC).

During his time at Virginia Tech, McBryde divided the college into separate departments, expanded the curriculum, oversaw the installation of an infirmary and a new water system, added dormitories and faculty housing, and increased enrollment from 135 students in 1891 to 727 by 1903. After his retirement in 1907, McBryde was the first person elected president emeritus for the college, eventually becoming known as "the father of VPI."

On November 18, 1863, McBryde married Cora Bolton. They had eight children, six of whom lived to adulthood: Janet (1864-1869), James (1866-1925), Anna (1868-1948; later Mrs. Robert J. Davidson), John McLaren, Jr. (1870-1956), Charles (1872-1962), Susan (1874-1951), Meade (1877-1959), and Waid (abt. 1878-?). John Bolton McBryde is the grandfather of Polly Ashelman.

In 1923, McBryde died at his son's home in New Orleans but was returned to Blacksburg, Virginia for burial.

# Scope and Content

The Polly Ashelman Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family contains five personal items given to McBryde and his wife Cora, arranged chronologically. The first item is the McMaster Medal, presented to McBryde for Distinguished Service to Mankind awarded by his alma mater, the University of South Carolina, in 1911. Three items from the University of Virginia relate to the 1912 Confederate Veteran Alumni Reunion, including a letter from W. M. Thornton, a medal presented to the veteran alumni, and list of veteran alumni.

The final item, a handwritten book of congratulations for John and Cora McBryde's 50th anniversary in 1913, is hand embossed and signed by the faculty who served under McBryde during his presidency at VPI. A printed "at home" card for Mr. and Mrs. McBryde is inserted in the book.

## Related Archival Materials

See also the following related collections at Virginia Tech Special Collections and University Archives:

Records of the Office of the President, John McLaren McBryde, RG 2/5

J. Bolton McBryde Collection, Ms1992-059

McBryde House Specification Records, Ms1999-010

Larry McBryde Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family, Ms2013-024

Janet Barnhill Collection on Cora Bolton McBryde, Ms2016-019

John M. and Cora Bolton McBryde Family Papers, Ms2023-069

Midhurst, J.M. McBryde Estate, Blacksburg, Va., Map-0276

Photographs of John M. McBryde are in the Faculty/Staff Photograph Collection

## Keywords

Faculty and staff

University Archives

University History

McBryde, John McLaren, 1841-1923

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

## Rights Statement for Archival Description

The guide to the Polly Ashelman Collection on the John McLaren McBryde Family by Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, is licensed under a CC0 (<https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/>).

## Arrangement

This collection is arranged chronologically.

## Description of Subordinate Components

### **McMaster Medal from UVA to John McBride**

**Unit Date** 1911

**box** 1

### **University of Virginia's Confederate Veteran Alumni Reunion**

**Unit Date** 1912

**box** 1

### **Letter from W. M. Thornton**

**Unit Date** 1912-07-01

**box** 1

### **Medal from the UVA Confederate Veteran Alumni Reunion**

**Unit Date** 1912

**box** 1

**List of Confederate Soldiers - University of Virginia Students for Reunion**

**Unit Date** 1912

**box** 1

**50th Anniversary Gift to the McBrydes from VPI Faculty**

**Unit Date** 1913

**box** 1