

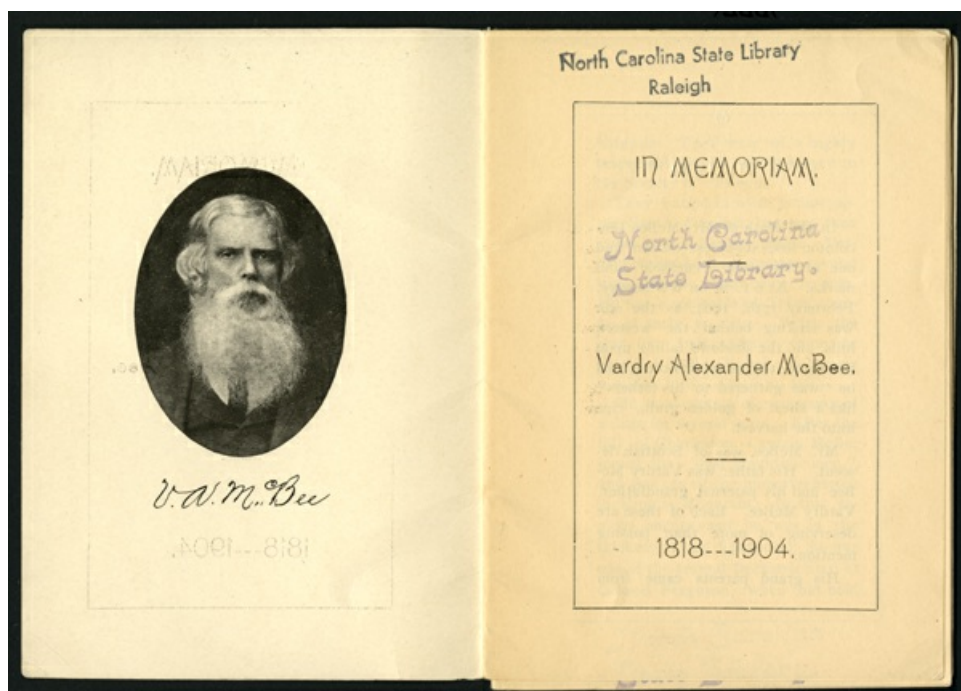
McBee, Vardry Alexander ^[1]

McBee, Vardry Alexander

by Allen H. Stokes, Jr., 1991

17 Apr. 1818–17 Feb. 1904

See also: [Vardry McBee](#) ^[2]



Vardry Alexander McBee 1818-1904," published circa 1904. From the collections of the Government & Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina.

Vardry Alexander McBee, lawyer, superior court clerk, and promoter of public improvements, was born in Lincolnton of Scottish ancestry. His father was [Vardry McBee](#) ^[2] (1775–1864), a merchant, clerk of the [Lincoln County Court](#) ^[3], promoter of manufactures, and railroad promoter and president; his mother was Jane Alexander. McBee received his early education at Lincolnton's Pleasant Retreat Academy, of which his father was a founder. He also attended the school of [Peter S. Ney](#) ^[4]. Entering [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[5] in 1837, he was graduated in 1841 with an A.B. degree. Afterwards he studied law and was licensed but he never practiced.

McBee's career followed closely that of his father, although he did not begin as a saddler. For one term he represented Lincoln County in the state legislature. On three occasions, for a total of fourteen years, he served as clerk of the Lincoln County Superior Court. Appointed in 1847, he was elected to a full term in 1849. He was appointed again in 1860 but resigned to run for the legislative seat of [John F. Hoke](#), ^[6] who was serving in the army. He received his third appointment in 1882 and in the same year was elected to a full term without opposition.

McBee invested in several [public improvement projects](#) ^[7]. He was a principal stockholder of the Western North Carolina [plank road](#) ^[8] from Charlotte to Lincolnton, and he helped to promote the Wilmington, Charlotte and Rutherford Railroad, which he also served as treasurer and master of transportation. He assumed a prominent role in the organization, location, and construction of the Chester and Lenoir Narrow Gauge Railroad and was a director for many years. He was also a stockholder of the Camperdown [Cotton] Mills in Greenville, S.C. In addition, he was a trustee of the male and female academies in Lincolnton that his father had promoted. McBee owned a large plantation near Lincolnton where he bred blooded stock, including cattle, horses, and hogs.

On 16 Dec. 1847 he married Mary Elizabeth Sumner (b. 1829), the daughter of Professor Benjamin Sumner, who was principal of both Lincolnton academies. The McBees had ten children. McBee was buried in the family plot at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Lincolnton.

References:

Alfred Nixon, *In Memoriam: Vardry Alexander McBee, 1818–1904*(1904).

William L. Sherrill, *Annals of Lincoln County, North Carolina* (1937).

James Thomas Williams, Sr., *Papers* (South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina).

Additional Resources:

Smith, Roy McBee. 1992. *Vardry McBee, 1775-1864: man of reason in an age of extremes* Spartanburg, S.C.: R.M. Smith.

Helsley, Alexia Jones. 2009. *Hidden history of Greenville County*. Charleston, S.C.: History Press.

Smith, Roy McBee. *Vardry McBee, 1775-1864 : man of reason in an age of extremes : a history of the settlement of the Carolina piedmont*. Spartanburg, SC: Laurel Heritage Press. 1997. (Government & Heritage Library, State Library of North Carolina.)

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