



# **Guide to the McMullen Family Papers, 1783-1969 and undated, bulk 1880-1945**

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## Summary

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**Collection Title:**

McMullen Family papers, 1783-1969 and undated bulk 1880-1945

**Creator:**

McMullen family

**Abstract:**

Family of Irish origin living in Pennsylvania, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. Family and business correspondence and invention papers of an Irish Catholic family living in Pennsylvania, Baltimore, Md., and Washington, D.C., whose members engaged in promoting inventions. The papers center on John Francis McMullen (1830-1900), and his wife, Lavelette (Johnson) McMullen. Includes letters from relatives in Ireland, from Virginia cousins and friends, from nuns of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, from business acquaintances, from friends traveling in the U.S. and Europe, and from the novelist Mary Johnston; and papers relating to the settlement of a disputed legacy left to Mary McMullen by Miss Jane Agnes Riggs, the last of the children of George Washington Riggs, Washington banker. Also includes manuscripts of the Confederate poet, John Banister Tabb, writings of Dysart and Mary McMullen, letters and poems of William Hand Browne, editor, author, and librarian, and correspondence of Mary McMullen which gives glimpses of the Riggs family.

**Extent:**

13.4 Linear Feet  
10,053 Items

**Physical Location:**

For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

**Language:**

English

**Language:**

Material in English

**Collection ID:**

RL.00882

**Permalink:**

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/mcmullenfamily/>

### **Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], McMullen Family Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University

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## **Background**

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### **Scope and Content**

Family and business correspondence and invention papers of the McMullen family, spanning the years 1783-1969, with the majority of the material dating from about 1880-1945. Arranged in the following series: **Correspondence, Legal Papers, Pictures, Financial Papers, Invention Papers, Miscellaneous, and Volumes.**

The papers of John McMullen (1791-1870), inventor, consist of correspondence concerning family matters in Ireland; McMullen's efforts to assist relatives in gaining passage to the United States, the operation of his farm in Sinking Valley in Pennsylvania; a trip to England, 1850-1851, to sell his inventions; the invention of machines to knit stockings and fish nets; patents; the receipt of the Exhibitor's Medal for a machine shown at the Exhibition of the Works of All Nations at the Crystal Palace, London, England, in 1853 including a letter from President Millard Fillmore notifying him of the award; and an exhibition of a knitting machine at the New York Crystal Palace at the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations in 1854.

The papers of John Francis McMullen (1830-1900), son of John McMullen, and of his wife, Lavalette (Johnston) McMullen (d. 1941), daughter of John Warfield Johnston, senator from Virginia, include correspondence while John Francis McMullen attended St. Mary's College, Baltimore, Maryland; letters from William Hand Browne (1828-1912), editor and librarian, describing his travels in the South during the early years of the Civil War; personal and family correspondence with friends and relatives, including letters from Senator Johnston containing references to his political activities; letters from the Sisters of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary concerning the education of the McMullen daughters at various schools run by the order; letters of Jean de Hedonville describing cattle ranching in Montana, life on the Crow Indian Reservation, and a camping trip to Yellowstone National Park; correspondence relating to the settlement of the estate of John Warfield Johnston; and business correspondence concerning his father's inventions and cattle raising.

Correspondence of the children of John Francis and Lavalette McMullen consists of letters of Mary McMullen, principally while a companion to Jane Agnes Riggs, daughter of George Washington Riggs, Washington banker, describing Riggs family history and their travels in Europe and the United States before World War I; letters to Mary from her cousin, novelist Mary Johnston (1870-1936); family letters of John Francis McMullen II (d. 1944), an engineer; letters of Benedict Dysart McMullen, writer, while serving with the American Red Cross in Europe during World War I; correspondence of Joseph Benjamin McMullen (d. 1965), inventor, concerning his many inventions, including aerial "drop" bombs during World War I, automobile accessories, kitchen utensils, household gadgets, and pressure and pull firing devices and collapsible vehicles during World War II; and papers relating to the settlement of a disputed legacy left Mary McMullen by Jane Riggs and correspondence concerning the sale of much of the inheritance. Also included are papers relating to the estates of the various members of the McMullen family; invention papers consisting of patents and descriptions of the work of John McMullen and Joseph B. McMullen; bills and receipts; lists of library books and Catholic publications purchased; manuscripts of William Hand Browne, John Bannister Tabb, Mary McMullen, and Dysart McMullen; and miscellaneous reports, certificates, and invitations from the many schools the McMullens attended.

Volumes consist of various business books of John McMullen and John Francis McMullen; subscription for the Catholic Church of Sinking Valley, 1830s; volumes of Joseph B. McMullen concerning his inventions; notebooks of writings and clippings of Mary McMullen and Dyeart McMullen; album of snapshots of their home, "Woodley," near Ellicott City, Maryland; and notebooks of Nicketti McMullen containing copies of old letters and data. There are also photographs of various members of the McMullen family and of homes at Wytheville, Thorn Springs, and Ellicott City.

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## **Administrative Information**

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### **Publication Statement**

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## **Use Restrictions**

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## **Acquisition Information**

The McMullen Family Papers were received by the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library as a purchase in 1966 and 1975.

## **Processing Information**

Processed by Rubenstein Library staff

Encoded by Ted Holt, May 2008

Accession 66-096 and the accession from 1975 are described in this finding aid.

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## **Names and Subjects**

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- Irish -- United States
- Poets, American
- Catholics -- United States
- Inheritance and succession -- Washington (D.C.)

- Authors, American
- United States -- History -- Civil War, 1861-1865 -- Poetry
- Women authors, American
- Tabb, John B. (John Banister), 1845-1909
- Riggs, Jane Agnes
- Riggs family
- McMullen, Mary, 1920-
- McMullen, Lavelette Johnson
- McMullen, John Francis, 1830-1900
- McMullen family
- Johnston, Mary
- Browne, William Hand, 1828-1912

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## Collection Inventory

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### Correspondence Series, 1783-1963 and undated

Physical Description: 21 boxes

1783-1849	Box 1
1850-1859	Box 2
1860-1874	Box 3
1875-1882	Box 4
1883-1888	Box 5
1889-1899	Box 6
1900-1905	Box 7
1906-1910	Box 8
1911-1915	Box 9
1916-1917	Box 10
1918	Box 11
1919-1920	Box 12
1921-1922	Box 13
1923-1925	Box 14

1926-1929	Box 15
1930-1933	Box 16
1932-1935	Box 17
1936-1939	Box 18
1940-1944	Box 19
1945-1954	Box 20
1955-1963 and undated	Box 21

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### **Legal Papers Series, 1780-1830s**

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes

1780s-1830s	Box 22
Peter and John McMullen	Box 22
Joseph E. McMullen	Box 25
Mary McMullen	Box 25
Riggs Estate	Box 25

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### **Pictures Series**

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes

Pictures	Box 23-24
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### **Financial Papers Series, 1828-1949**

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes

1828-1870s	Box 26
1880's-1949 (Riggs Family Inventory)	Box 27

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### **Invention Papers Series**

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes

Joseph B. McMullen	Box 28
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John McMullen and Joseph B. McMullen	Box 29
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### **Miscellaneous Series**

**Physical Description:** 2 boxes

Printed Material	Box 30
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Pamphlets	Box 30
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Leaflets	Box 30
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Clippings	Box 30
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Riggs Family Material	Box 30
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Writings and Poetry	Box 31
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John Bannister Tabb	Box 31
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Mary F. McMullen	Box 31
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Dysart McMullen	Box 31
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Miscellany	Box 31
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### **Volumes Series**

**Physical Description:** 3 boxes

Volumes	Box 32-33
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Volumes, John and John Francis McMullen	Box 34
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## **Oversize Materials**

Two photographs of McMullen family and relatives at a reunion in Pennsylvania	Box 34 > Folder 1
Invention papers, John McMullen	Box 34 > Folder 2
Invention papers, John McMullen	Box 34 > Folder 3

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