

Radford University celebrated John Preston McConnell's 145th birthday on Tuesday, February 22. Faculty, staff, and students came to celebrate McConnell's life and all the great things he accomplished.

The celebration began at noon in the library and lasted throughout the day. Interim University Librarian Steve Helm opened the celebration and gave a brief biography on McConnell and how he became Radford's first president and the man we all know today.

John Preston McConnell was born in Scott County, Va. in 1866. He received his bachelor and master's degree from Milligan College in Tennessee and received his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. McConnell was one of the first four students to receive a Ph.D. at the university in history and economics. Before he came to Radford, he was a dean and a professor of history and economics at Emory and Henry from 1904-1913.

In 1911, McConnell helped with the planning of the construction of The State Normal and Industrial School for Women in East Radford. McConnell became the president of the school in 1913 when it first opened. While he was president, the name of the school changed in 1924 to Radford State Teacher's College.

In 1932, the campus library was named after McConnell, and in 1937 he retired. McConnell died three years later.

"He was an advocate for all social causes," Helm said. "Especially when it came to education for women."

According to the Radford website, McConnell was a strong supporter for the need of quality education for women. Even though his beliefs were unfashionable at the time, McConnell wanted to ensure equal access to information, courses and materials for female students.

There was a cake cutting ceremony and a special guest attended the celebration, Delilah McConnell, the wife of John McConnell's grandson. She was given the honor of cutting the cake while everyone sang 'Happy Birthday.'

It was a memorable celebration where everyone looked back at all of McConnell's achievements and everything he did to make Radford University what it is today. John Preston McConnell left his mark on Radford's campus and he will always be remembered.