

**theotheralexandria***African Americans of Alexandria, VA***Colonel John McKee**Posted on [January 17, 2012](#)**A COLORED  
MILLIONAIRE.**WHO OWNED THOUSANDS OF  
ACRES OF REAL ESTATE  
PASSES AWAY.

John McKee, Philadelphia's Dis-  
tinct Negro Aristocrat—Owned More  
Than 300 City Blocks Unin-  
habited—Founder and Owner  
of McKee City, New Jersey, and  
Thousand of Acres of Real Es-  
tate Elsewhere—Was at one  
Time Called the Millionaire—Was  
Possibly the Wealthiest Negro  
in the Country.

Colonel John McKee, who died Sat-  
urday night after a long illness, 100 years  
old, was the owner of a considerable  
estate, as the result of a successful career  
in the city. It was the property, he was  
said to be worth more than \$1,000,000,  
and his real estate holdings were valued  
between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000.

Partial listing -  
Baltimore Afro-  
American - April 12,  
1902

John McKee was one of Alexandria, Virginia most successful African Americans. At the time of his death, he was known as the wealthiest African American in the country.

He was born in Alexandria, Virginia around 1819. In 1838, he registered as a freed person of color in Alexandria. The registration stated, "John McKee is a bright mulatto boy, about 19 years old, 5 feet 4½ inches tall, who is straight built with light colored eyes. He was born free, as appears by oaths of Betsey Beckley and Fanny Beckley."

When he was in his teens, Mr. McKee was indentured as a brick maker. He later ran away to Baltimore, Maryland; but was brought back to Alexandria by his Uncle to finish his time of indenture.

John was 21-years old when he migrated to Philadelphia and worked in the livery stable. Later he started working for James Prosser, a well-known restaurant owner on Market Street in Philadelphia. He married his employer's daughter.



Colonel John  
McKee

When the civil war started, John organized and became the Colonel of the Thirteenth Regiment, National Guard of Pennsylvania (N.G.P.) in the Fifth Brigade under General Louis Wagner. Later, John became the Colonel of the Eighth New Jersey colored regiment.

From that time on, John was known as Colonel John McKee. He became wealthy in real estate. At the time of his death, he owned 300 to 400 houses. He was the founder and owner of McKee City on the West Jersey Railroad in New Jersey a tract of 4,000 acres divided into twenty-one farms. He also owned about 300,000 acres of coal and oil land in Kentucky and Logan County, West Virginia, and a tract of twenty-one acres at Fifty Street and Oregon Avenue in Philadelphia. He owned over 23,000 acres of land in two-counties in New York, and sixty acres of land on the Delaware River as well as many other properties in other States.

Colonel John McKee died April 6, 1902 at his home at 1030 Lombard Street in Philadelphia. His funeral was at Central Presbyterian Church and his internment was at Olivet Cemetery. John had one living daughter at the time of his death, Mrs. A.P. Syphax. He also had six grandsons and two of his grandsons lived in Washington, DC.

John's accomplishments were outstanding for a black man that was born in the early 1800s. His total asset at the end of his life was between \$1.5 million to \$2 million. Others at the time of his death said it was \$4 million. John left a quarter of a million dollars to family members and friends. The bulk of his money and property went to the Catholic Church to establish a school for fatherless children of both races. Even today, there are scholarships for fatherless children in his name.

John will be remembered as one of Alexandria most successful African Americans.