



Dr. John Malcolm McCardell Jr. is an esteemed American historian, academic leader, and advocate for liberal arts education, best known for his tenure as Vice-Chancellor and President of Sewanee: The University of the South from 2010 to 2020.

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Early Life and Education

Born on June 17, 1949, in Frederick, Maryland, McCardell’s early life was marked by academic achievement and a deep-rooted Episcopalian faith. He graduated from Washington and Lee University in 1971 and subsequently pursued advanced studies at The Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University, earning his Ph.D. in History in 1976. His dissertation, “The Idea of a Southern Nation,” received the prestigious Allan Nevins Prize in 1977 and cemented his reputation as a scholar of the American South.

Academic and Administrative Career

McCardell joined Middlebury College’s History department in 1976, beginning a long association that would see him rise through the ranks to become Dean of Academic Development, Dean of the Faculty, and, in 1992, the institution’s fifteenth president, serving until 2004. As Middlebury president, he led infrastructure improvements, expanded the academic mission, and worked to enhance the school’s national reputation in liberal arts

education. In recognition of his service, the college's principal science building was renamed in his honor.

A prolific writer and nationally recognized expert in U.S. 19th-century history, McCardell has contributed numerous essays, chapters, articles, and reviews, with a particular focus on the Old South and American historiography.

Leadership at Sewanee

McCardell became Sewanee's sixteenth vice-chancellor and president in 2010, guiding the university through a period of growth and academic excellence. Under his leadership, applications and campus visits surged, and the school's strategic vision sharpened—strengthening its reputation among liberal arts institutions and Episcopal seminaries. After a decade in office, McCardell stepped down in 2020 but continued to serve as a professor of history.

Advocacy and Public Service

Apart from his university roles, McCardell is known for his public advocacy, particularly as the founder of Choose Responsibility, an organization that argues for lowering the U.S. legal drinking age to 18 to promote responsible alcohol use. He also initiated the Amethyst Initiative, assembling over 120 college presidents to encourage reconsideration of current drinking-age laws.

McCardell's influence extends to service on numerous academic boards and professional organizations, including chairing the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and the NCAA Division III Presidents' Council. Recognized for his scholarship, leadership, and commitment to ethical debate, he leaves a legacy of institutional advancement and public engagement in higher education.

Dr. John McCardell is known for his scholarship on the American South and his work in higher education leadership. Below are his major publications and awards.

Major Publications

- **The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860** (1979): This foundational work, developed from his Harvard dissertation, received widespread recognition and won the 1977 Allan Nevins Prize. It explores southern identity and political ideology before the Civil War.
- **In the Cause of Liberty: How the Civil War Redefined American Ideals:** McCardell contributed as a co-editor and essayist to this significant volume examining the impact of the Civil War on American values.
- **Yea, Sewanee's Right! A Pictorial History of the University of the South:** A visual and historical account of Sewanee, reflecting his tenure and appreciation of the university's legacy.

- **The ReFounding of Sewanee:** An exploration of the university's renewal in modern times, reflecting historical insight and institutional knowledge.
- In addition to these, he has written numerous essays, book chapters, articles, and book reviews, particularly on 19th-century history, southern regionalism, and higher education leadership.

Major Awards and Honors

- **Allan Nevins Prize** (1977): Awarded by the Society of American Historians for his dissertation, later published as "The Idea of a Southern Nation".
- **Sullivan Medallion** (Washington and Lee University): Recognized at his undergraduate alma mater for leadership and service.
- **Grants and Fellowships:** Recipient of distinctions from the American Philosophical Society, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for Southern Studies in support of his research.
- **Luminary Award** (Sullivan Foundation): Presented for his leadership and influence as an educator and public intellectual.
- **Named Honors:** The science building at Middlebury College was renamed the John M. McCardell Jr. Bicentennial Hall in recognition of his service as president.
- **Honorary Degrees:** McCardell has received honorary doctorates from multiple institutions, including Washington and Lee University, St. Michael's College, and Middlebury College.
- **Memberships:** Elected member of Phi Beta Kappa and Omicron Delta Kappa for academic achievement and leadership.

Dr. McCardell's career is marked by enduring influence both as a historian and as a collegiate leader, with published work and accolades reflecting a lifelong commitment to scholarship and service.

Personal Life

Dr. John McCardell is married to Bonnie Greenwald McCardell, who is recognized for her advocacy in quality childcare, education, eldercare, and retirement communities. Bonnie is a graduate of Connecticut College and holds a master's degree in early childhood from the University of South Carolina.

Together, they have two grown sons: John Malcolm McCardell III and James B. "Jamie" McCardell. The family has lived in various academic communities, including Middlebury, Vermont, and more recently in Beaufort, South Carolina, and Sewanee, Tennessee—reflecting Dr. McCardell's academic leadership roles and ongoing professorship.