

## *A Brief History of Edwin Merton McBrier*

The McBriers moved to the United States from Ireland in 1827. They had 8 children. Albon was the youngest. He was born in Rodman, NY. in 1839.

In 1853, when Albon was about 14, his father, Henry, bought a 251.5 acre farm, two miles from Russell on the road leading to Edwards.

In 1863, Albon and Calista Brown were married by Reverend Moore, the marriage taking place in the home of Moore's nephew, John and Jane Loucks. Calista was born in Hermon in 1845. Her mother, Clarissa Brown (Allen,) was a member of the Christian Church at Marshville.

Albon continued to work on the farm, and in 1866, Albon bought the farm from his father.

Albon and Calista had three children. Edward Merton McBrier was the oldest child of Albon and Calista Brown McBrier's three children.

Edwin Merton (1865) and his brother, Mason Bower (1870) were both born on the Russell farm. The family continued to live there until 1877, when the McBriers bought a smaller farm of 52 acres, located two miles from Hermon, on the road leading to East DeKalb. It was here, in 1879, that the third child, Mildred Hamlin, was born. Albon, their father, continued to be a successful farmer and cattle and horse businessman.

In 1887, Edwin Merton, the elder son, after teaching school for a while, started a 5 and 10 cent store in Lockport, NY in partnership with his cousins, Frank W. Woolworth and Seymour Knox.

In 1892, Edwin married Carrie Loucks. She was from Hermon (1871.) She went to live in Lockport, NY where her husband, Merton, was the manager of the Knox and McBrier store. In 1894 they moved to Detroit where Knox and McBrier opened the Detroit store. In Detroit, 1898, their first daughter, Geraldine Elizabeth was born. Their second daughter, Kathryn Lois was born in 1901 in Buffalo.

They continued to move to different cities, finally to Montclair, NJ as the Woolworth Company formed in 1912 and grew as it's executive offices moved to New York.

From their boarding house in Lockport until 1913 when they purchased a home at 203 South Mountain Ave., in Montclair, they had lived in thirteen different localities. They had been married for 21 years. They were active in organizations and travelled widely during 1922-1937.

During these years, they were also very interested in their home town of Hermon and improving it.

1 Their first undertaking was the landscaping of the Hermon Cemetery and the building of the granite McBrier Memorial (memorial to the McBrier and Loucks families.)

2 A movement was instigated for the paving all village streets which the village did - the McBrier's contribution was a new system of ornamental street lights, fed from underground conduits.

3 McBrier thought it unacceptable that the village did not own the property on which its water springs were located. The village had an excellent series of springs. He used his influence to purchase the required acreage, and also necessary improvements were made. Enamel lined water storage tanks were installed at the springs, the plot was newly fenced and reforested, and he felt that an abundant supply of pure spring water was secured for future generations.

4 He purchased several old homesteads and business properties on Main Street and Water Street and converted these plots into a park, now what we know as McBrier Park;

5 He purchased the Hermon Hotel, and outfitted the lobby with wicker, a bubbling fountain of spring water from the village water supply system. Four of the five rooms were with private bath.

6 He financed the modernization of the artistic old stone bridge which arched Elm Creek. He considered this the remaining and most important item of the improvements he wanted to accomplish in the eleven year period ending in 1935. (READ from page 2 of article.)

Mrs. Carrie Loucks was a very active participant with him in these endeavors. She was artistic and for both of them, it was a very rewarding experience to be able to do something constructive in their old home town.

For them, when the work was completed, Hermon was considered one of the most attractive small villages in the county.

Mrs. McBrier died in August, 1938. Edwin Merton McBrier died in 1956.

Citations:

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Watertown Daily Times, May 15, 1928