

McBERTY Frank Robert
(1868-1950)



Frank Robert McBERTY - c.1911
Identification Photo – [1]

Frank Robert McBERTY, was born on 14 Feb 1868, in Sharon, Mercer County, Pennsylvania, USA, to Robert McBERTY (1833-1918) and Harriet McBERTY, nee KNOWLES (1839-1930)

The 1870 Census, records the family residing in Warren, Ward 2, Turnbull County, Ohio.

Frank began his working career in Warren at his father's woodworking factory, where he made and sold several telephones.

Frank, aged 23, married Frances Mary HAPGOOD (1869-1955), aged 21, on 05 May 1891, in Turnbull, Ohio.

Frank and Frances had three children, two sons and one daughter:

1. Ford Hapgood McBERTY, born 08 Jan 1897 Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.
2. Robert Knowles McBERTY, born 06 Feb 1900, in Evanston, Ward 6, Cook County, Illinois.
3. Katherine B McBERTY, born 1902, in Evanston, Ward 6, Cook County, Illinois.

Frank secured a position with the Western Electric Company, in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. On 06 Feb 1900, Frank was living in Evanston, Ward 6, Cook County, Illinois.

In 1909, Frank transferred from the Western Electric Company, in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, to the Western Electric Headquarters and Factory at 463 West Street, Lower Manhattan, New York.

In Apr 1910, Frank was living, in New Rochelle, Ward 2 Westchester, New York.

On 29 Nov 1910, the first field trial a 400 line 7A Rotary Semi-automatic Machine Switching System had been successfully placed in service at the Western Electric Headquarters and Factory, at 463 West Street, Lower Manhattan, New York.

Between May 1911 to May 1912, Frank was working on the development of the 7A Automatic switching system, at Western Electric subsidiary company Zwietusch GmbH, Berlin, Germany.

When in May 1912, Zwietusch GmbH, Berlin, was taken over by the German company Siemens and Halske, who had Strowger manufacturing patent rights, Frank, presumably to avoid possible conflict of interest, transferred to the Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company, in Antwerp, Belgium.

Between May 1912 and Aug 1914, Frank was working, setting up the factory for the manufacturing of 7A Rotary machine switching system, at the Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company, in Antwerp, Belgium.

On 02 Mar 1914, Frank lived at 49 Boulevard Leopold (Prins Leopoldstat), Antwerpen, Belgium. **[2]**

Bombardment of Antwerp, Belgium, commenced on 07 Oct 1914 and continued until 09 Oct 1914. **[3]**

Work continued at Antwerp until the last moment - in fact, until the 06 Oct 1914, when the Germans began bombarding the city's outer fortress. Then McBerty and his associates decided that the time probably was right for a prompt exit.

They left Antwerp by boat for England, ploughing unwittingly through Dutch mine fields and dodging Dutch coast guns which fired upon them. Finally snaking their way through British mine fields they made their way up the Thames to London.

The trip instead of taking the vessel 12 or 14 hours, took four days.

McBerty and his co-workers had managed to salvage vital equipment, drawings and apparatus before the Germans took over the Antwerp plant. They had been loaded into scows and moved to England - just ahead of the Germans. Hence, it was possible to "*set up shop*" again and continue operations in the London factory. **[4]**

Between Oct 1914 and Jun 1916, Frank lived in London, while employed at the Western Electric Woolwich company in London, England. **[5]**

On 10 Oct 1914, the first fully automatic 7A Rotary exchange, with a capacity for 2800 lines, was cutover at Dallington, England. **[6]**

In 1917 the British War Office took over the factory and McBerty found himself concerned with war equipment rather than telephones.

While still in England McBerty was designated by the war department, along with a number of other inventors to work on war inventions.

He helped develop accustical zeppelin detectors, electrical submarine detectors and automatic range finders for high-powered guns.

Soon after, however McBerty decided to return to the United States. His sons, Ford and Robert, were becoming of military age and the inventor felt that if was necessary for them to serve in the armed force he would rather it be the American rather than the British army. [7]

The family departed Liverpool, England, on 21 Jun 1916, arriving New York on 30 Jun 1916. [8]

In 1918, that McBerty decided to leave the Western Electric company. It was tied up with war work and McBerty wanted to continue telephone development and research.

The North Electric company at Galion, one of the oldest independent manufacturers of telephone apparatus, interested McBerty and a number of his associates, realising the strong position of the company, reorganised it.

Since then McBerty had lead the Galion firm to dominancy in the independent telephone field and was its president.

During the First World War the firm manufactured radio telephonic direction finders for airplanes, a highly technical and difficult appliance.

At the end of the war the company obtained additional capital and besides manufacturing conventional telephone equipment launched into the manufacture of a new "*all-relay*" system.

McBerty was actively engaged in the design, development and perfection of this system. Several thousand of the new exchanges were manufactured and installed in the United States and European and Asiatic countries.

The culmination of McBerty's career of inventing lies in the invention of the McBerty relay system of dial automatic switching, which was first placed on the market in 1939. He continued to devote much time to developing this system. His son Robert, vice president in charge of patents, research, and development, aided him in this work. [9]

In January of 1949 Frank turned over the presidency of the company to his son Robert, of Galion, while retaining the Chair. [10]

Among the many honours that have come to McBerty, are his selection of "*fellow*" of the American Institute of Electrical Engineers and recognition of his as founder of the Western Society of Engineers.

He was one of the few persons to be admitted to the full membership of the British Institute of Electrical Engineers without having passed through the lower grades of membership.

Other high honours at home and abroad, include medals of honour from the 1906 and 1914 Paris expositions. In 1917 he received the Fahy prize for his paper on "*Machine Switching Telephone Gear*".

Besides being a charter member of the American Chamber of Commerce in London, he had been at various times a member of the United States, Ohio, Cleveland and Mansfield Chamber of Commerce and

of the Rotary Kiwanis clubs. For a number of years he had been a director of the U.S. Independent Telephone association. [11]

Between 1927 and 1930, the McBERTYs resided at, Galion, Crawford County, Ohio.



Frank Robert McBERTY
Later years – [12]

Frank passed away on 18 Feb 1950, at his residence at 1450 Park Avenue West, Mansfield, Richland County, Ohio, aged 82 years.

He was buried in Ontario, Richland, Ohio. [13]

References:

- 1 Ref: Find a Grave.com
- 2 Ancestry.com – McBerty Family Tree
- 3 Wikipedia.com
- 4 News-Journal (Mansfield, Ohio) - 29 Feb 1948, Sun - Page 9.
- 5 Ancestry.com – McBerty Family Tree
- 6 Ferrymead P.&.T.H.S. - Telecommunication History Archives
- 7 News-Journal (Mansfield, Ohio) - 29 Feb 1948, Sun - Page 9.
- 8 Ancestry.com – McBerty Family Tree
- 9 News-Journal (Mansfield, Ohio) - 29 Feb 1948, Sun - Page 9.
- 10 News-Journal (Mansfield, Ohio) 19 Feb. 1950, Sun. Page 1.
- 11 News-Journal (Mansfield, Ohio) - 29 Feb 1948, Sun - Page 9.
- 12 Find a Grave.com
- 13 Ancestry.com – McBerty Family Tree

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Ferryroad Post & Telegraph Historical Society Inc.,
Christchurch, New Zealand.
7 December 2024.*