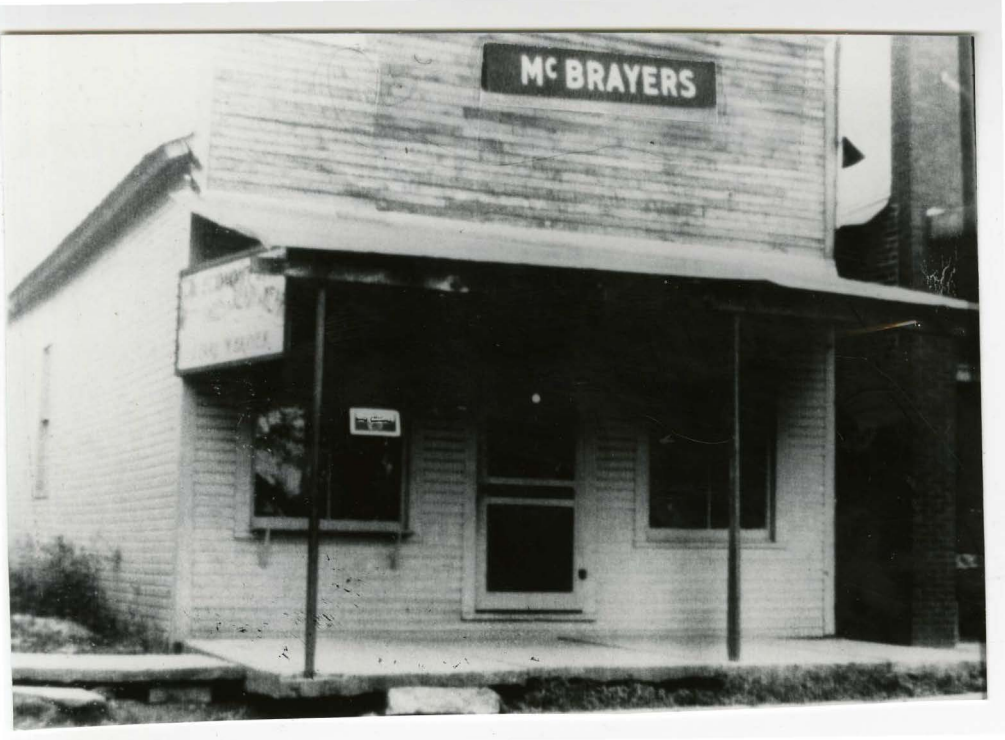


MC BRAYERS

Mc BRAYERS  
MEAT MARKET  
100 YARDS

Mc BRAYERS



III

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19202

S. WILSON AVE

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Dr. Jack D. Ellis  
552 W. Sun St.  
Morehead, KY 40351  
606-784-7478





Article Pub 6-19-98

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WASHERS

STOVES  
RANGES

FLOOR  
COVERINGS

EASY  
PAYMENTS

FREE



FREE



ACME  
QUALITY  
PAINT

6-1998  
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*Revolutions in Paper*  
6-1998



# Morehead Memories (People and Places)

## McBrayer Store (Phone 180) 1934-1997

By Jack D. Ellis

*(Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles about local history entitled Morehead Memories: People and Places. The articles will deal with those business and professional people that helped Morehead grow and prosper.)*

The street sign on the corner said Fairbanks Avenue, and in the mid 1930s it was a busy street. (Now the street sign says South Wilson Avenue.)

There is not much traffic now, but then it was an extremely busy thoroughfare, connecting the established business district including banks, depot, hotels and freight station located on Railroad Street, (now First Street), and the more recent businesses and post office on Main Street.

### Economy Store Opens

It was Nov. 1, 1934 when J.

Earl McBrayer opened a new store on Fairbanks Avenue (now South Wilson). It was called the "Economy Store," and consisted of 25 feet on the side of a building operated by the Farmers Produce Exchange. It opened with an inventory of about \$150 in odds and ends of shoes, dry goods, and clothing. The first day total sales were two 5 cent handkerchiefs.

### Economy Store Expands

But business improved and Mr. McBrayer expanded to include all of the building. In 1936 the Economy Store added additional inventory to include seeds, fertilizer, light farm tools, furniture and appliances. In order to expand Mr. McBrayer said "he had to go into debt to the extent it would even scare him today." Even though the business was growing and the

work was demanding, Earl and his wife, Martha, operated the business with one part-time employee. Later, others were added as business increased.

### The Flood Came

Then on the night of July 4, 1939, a date that will forever remain in the minds of Moreheadians who were living here then, a devastating flash flood hit the city. Twenty-six people in Rowan County lost their lives in the roaring flood waters of rampaging Triplett Creek, and Moreheadians have never been the same. Now every time the thunder rolls and the lightning flashes, older residents cast a wary eye at the sky, and look for the high ground.

With so much carnage and loss of property and life in the flood, Mr. McBrayer even hesitated to mention what it cost him. But it appeared that he

was ruined financially.

He had just bought \$15,000 (a fortune then) worth of merchandise (all on credit) when the flood roared down Railroad Street and Fairbanks Avenue. The water was 10 feet deep in his store, and everything was lost. But grateful that he and his family survived, he was determined to rebuild his business.

Together with Martha they slowly rebuilt their business on Fairbanks Avenue. They paid off every single dollar they owed as a result of the flood. Many people would have taken the bankrupt law, but not Earl and Martha McBrayer. In 1942 they moved the furniture part of the business to Main Street. (Higher ground).

### Earl Enters WWII

In 1944 in spite of having six

children Earl McBrayer was drafted into the military service. Martha continued to operate the business as well as care for the children while her husband was in the Army Air Corp. When Earl returned he bought Frank Haven's portion of the 5 and 10 cent store, and he and Dwight Pierce operated the business until 1962 when Earl bought Dwight Pierce's half of the business. Earl also founded Forest Lawn Memorial Gardens, and operated that business after his retirement from the store.

### Early Entrepreneur

Earl was an early entrepreneur in Morehead. He was one of the founders of Radio Station WMOR and served as radio announcer and host of the original WMOR Swapshop for several years.

In addition to managing his

furniture and appliance store he also was in the 5 and 10 cent store business. Later, he was a partner in the Stucky Funeral Home on W. Main Street, and he also was a successful farmer.

Earl and Martha McBrayer were successful in spite of flood, war, and the Depression. They helped this community grow from a small village to a thriving metropolitan area. They were successful through hard work, prayer and determination.

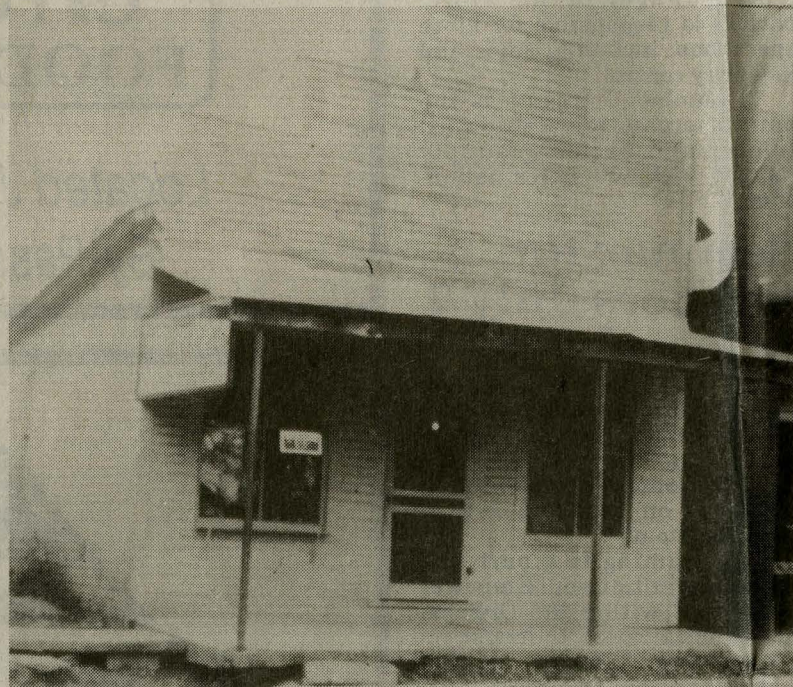
Two of their children, Jack McBrayer and Pauline Ellington continued operating McBrayers Store until February 1997 when it fell victim to the "outlanders" chain stores with a "bigger is better syndrome."

But there was a McBrayers Store in Morehead for 63 years. (November, 1934-February 1997).



### About the author

Dr. Jack D. Ellis is a retired Morehead State University Library director and a retired minister.



McBrayers Economy Store opened on Nov. 1, 1934 on Fairbanks Avenue (now S. Wilson) in Morehead. This building had 8 to 10 feet of water in it during the 1939 flood.



McBrayer Furniture and Appliance Store with new washing machines for sale WWII. Notice the prices and the "technology" machines all had power wring top. (This was before spin dry).





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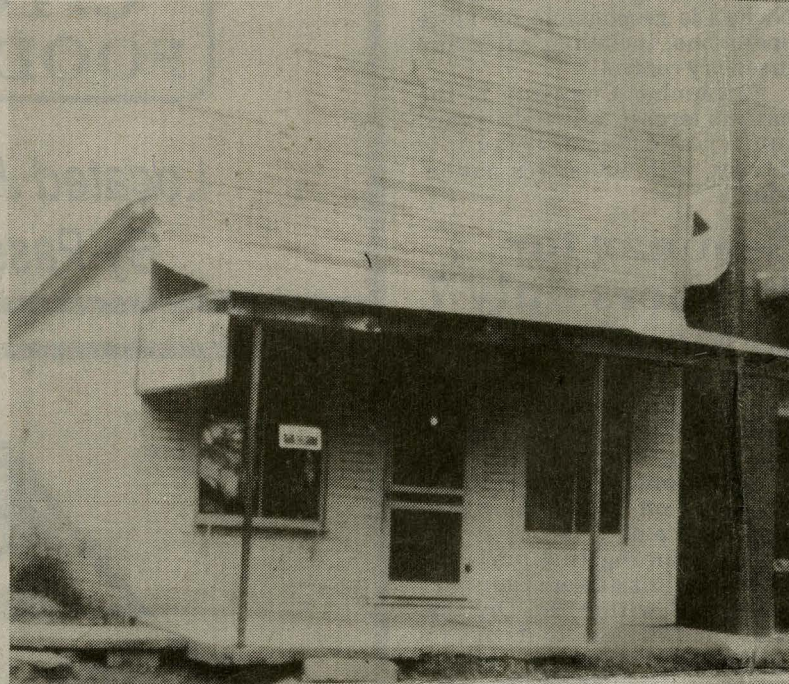
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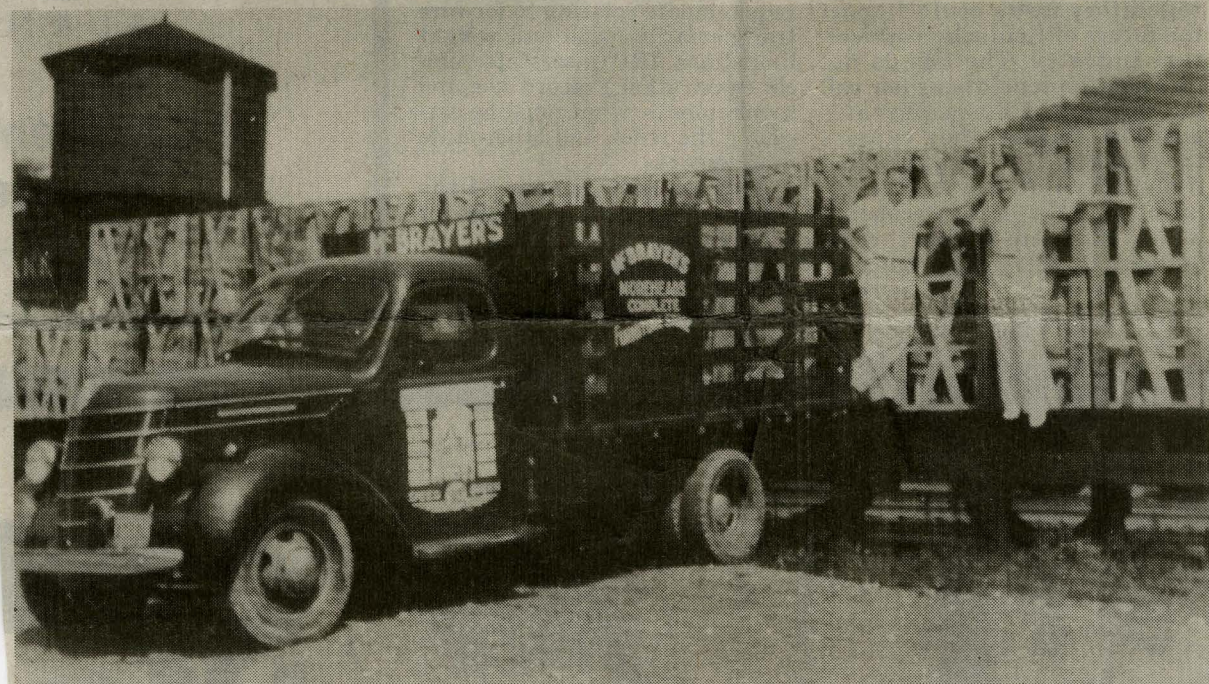
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McBrayer Furniture and Appliance Store with new washing machines during WWII. Notice the prices and the "New Technology" machines all had top. (This was before spin dry).



In 1948 when it was almost impossible to get washing machines (because of WWII) Earl McBrayer (left) succeeded in buying a freight car load. He is shown unloading his new "Speed Queen" washing machines for his appliance store.





MC BRAYERS

W. J. STONEY  
MILWAUKEE  
AND WISCONSIN

W. J. STONEY



McBreyers Economy Store

opened Nov. 1, 1934

ON

Fairbanks Ave (Now S. Wilson)

MOREHEAD KY

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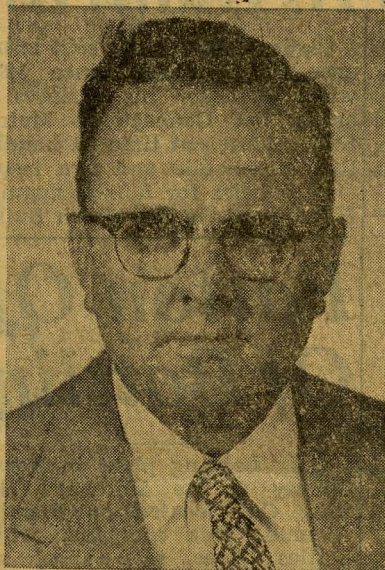
# Self-Service Plan Of McBrayer-Pierce

The McBrayer-Pierce Co., known throughout Eastern Kentucky as one of the most modern and efficient stores of its type in the entire area, is also one of the most recently organized in Morehead.

It was formed in January, 1955, when J. Earl McBrayer purchased Frank Havens' interest in the Big 5¢ & 10¢ Store on Railroad Street. This store had been organized by Mr. Havens and Dwight Pierce shortly after World War II.

The new McBrayer-Pierce partnership moved the 5¢ and 10¢ Store to the location of McBrayer's Furniture Store on Main Street where it has continued in operation. The move tripled available floor space to 6,000 square feet and enabled the company to increase its stock accordingly. The store now stocks all types of merchandise usually found in this kind of store, plus hundreds of other items.

In the organization of the business, a system of merchandising was introduced which had not before been attempted in variety store merchandising in this area. This is the self-service system which has proved successful in food markets all over the country and in variety stores in the more progressive towns and cities.



**Earl McBrayer**

The McBrayer-Pierce Co. has recently opened a store of the same type in Olive Hill.

This company is one that adds prestige to the progress of Morehead and Rowan County. They have paced the way on many civic undertakings.

It is rare that a city the size of Morehead can boast a store of this type.





L.-R.: Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Chapman; Mr. and Mrs. Phil McBrayer; Mr. and Mrs. Bert Dixon;  
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Asbun; Mr. and Mrs. Jack McBrayer; Mr. and Mrs. Harold Ellington; and  
Mr. and Mrs. Earl McBrayer.



M & Breyer Variety Stores 114  
1962 was a family store.  
No family included here

**From The Collection Of:  
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