Elijah McCoy.

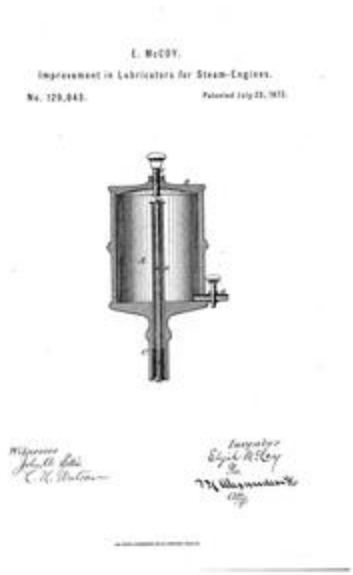
Published in: Salem Press Primary Encyclopedia, 2023, Topic Overviews K-5

Birth Date: May 2, 1848

Death Date: October 10, 1929

Elijah McCoy was a Canadian-American inventor. He was a talented mechanical engineer. However, he struggled to find work because he was black. He is best known for his inventions of oil cups. These devices were used on steam engines. They made train travel much more efficient. His inventions worked so well that people didn't want to use copies. They wanted the one he invented. People came up with familiar phrase *the real McCoy* when talking about his original inventions.

Elijah J. McCoy See page for author [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons



Elijah McCoy's US patent 129,843, dated July 23, 1872. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Early Life

McCoy was born in Ontario, Canada, to Mildred Goins and George McCoy. His parents were slaves from Kentucky. They managed to escape from the South through the Underground Railroad. His father joined the Canadian Army and fought in Canada's Patriot War. As a result of George McCoy's service, the family became free Canadian citizens. However, when his son was five years old, the family decided to move back to the United States. The McCoys now settled in Michigan. As a child, McCoy loved machines. He was always trying to fix mechanical things. When he was fifteen, his parents sent him to Scotland to study mechanical engineering.

The Inventor

McCoy returned to the United States in 1863 shortly after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Back home again, he joined his family as a mechanical engineer. However, he struggled to find suitable work. No companies wanted to give a black man a professional job. He eventually took a job as a fireman and oiler at the Michigan Central Railroad. His job was to shovel coal into the firebox of engines. He also had to grease the wheels and

bearings of the train. He came up with an idea to make oiling the axles easier. He invented a lubricating cup. This cup could drip oil whenever it was necessary. As a result of his invention, trains would be able to travel greater distances without having to stop.

The Real McCoy

The lubricating cup was a huge success. Other railroad companies demanded it too. Soon other people started creating copies of this invention. However, companies preferred the original and asked for the Real McCoy. Since then, this phrase has become part of the English language **.**

Personal Life

McCoy married Ann Elizabeth Stewart in 1868. She died fours later. In 1873, he married Mary Eleanor Delaney. The couple moved to Detroit in 1873 when McCoy found work there. The McCoys had been married for nearly fifty years when they were involved in a serious accident. Mary later died of her injuries.

Later Works and Death

For a long time, McCoy was not able to put his name on any of his inventions. He could not do so because he didn't have the money to produce his lubricators. As a result, he would sell off the rights of his lubricators to investors. This situation changed when he formed the Elijah McCoy Manufacturing Company. This company started producing lubricators with his name on it. He had a full and long life. Unfortunately, he suffered from health problems. In addition to hypertension, he became senile late in life. He passed away when he was eighty-one.

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