

Biography of Garlitz, Christian

Originally written by Charles E. Hoye (published on February 7, 1935). Charles B. Garlet has written an article showing that Hoye's conclusions are incorrect. To read Charles account of the first Garlitz in the county, [click here!](#)

[The following article was published in the Mountain Democrat on the above date and a copy found at the Maryland Historical Society in Filing Case A.]

The ancestor of the Garlitz family in America was doubtless one of the early German emigrants in Pennsylvania.

Christian Garlitz I, soon after the American Revolution, moved from Montgomery County, Maryland to what is now Greenville township, Somerset County, Pa. He settled just north of the Maryland line and was one of the first settlers of that township, then well forested and a fine hunting ground. In the census of 1790 "Christy Garlick" is listed in Bedford (now Somerset) County, with a family of five males and three females.

Three of Christian's sons were Christian, John and Henry. A daughter married John Custer of Cresaptown, Md., and became the grandmother of the famous General George A. Custer. John and Henry remained in Somerset County, where they were listed as subject to military duty in 1789, and were on the assessment roll of 1796. Henry died in Greenville township in 1836.

Christian Garlitz, II (b. 1777, d. 1845) married Elizabeth, daughter of Gasper Durst. In 1800 he was located in Maryland, on what later became the Samuel Brown farm, north of the Little Crossings; he then had a wife and one child.

In 1804 Christian "Garlets" purchased of Mitchell Robertson of Va., for L25 (\$65), Lots 2062, 61, 66, 67, 200 acres; this land is on Chestnut Ridge three miles south of Grantsville, later the property of Jacob Gnegy and now owned by Gideon Gnegy. It may be of interest to note that these four lots were awarded for service during the revolution to Robert Halkerstone of Charles Co., Md., a lieutenant of the Maryland Line, who sold them in 1799 to Robertson for L12.

Here on Chestnut Ridge young Christian Garlitz built his log house, cleared a farm and reared a family. On the assessment roll of 1804-12 his lots were listed at a valuation of \$32; he also had 2 horses and 4 cattle - \$89.

From Chestnut Ridge "Christly" hunted and killed the wild animals for miles around. And here he died at the age of sixty-eight, victim of a long besieging tumor in his throat. His widow survived him until 1863. This pioneer couple is doubtless buried in the graveyard on their farm, now the Gnegy place, but in unmarked and neglected graves.

On November 26, 1845, Christian's wife, Elizabeth, recommended to the Orphan's Court that their son, Basil, be appointed administrator of his father's estate. He was appointed, and John Blocher and George Bruce were named appraisers.

Children of Christian and Elizabeth Garlitz were - Henry, Jonas, Jacob (b. 1805), Basil Tomlinson, Margaret (m. Yeast) and two other daughters.

Basil T. Garlitz (m. - Lyston) was a prominent citizen of Allegany County. He operated the Tremont Hotel in Cumberland, and in 1863 - 65 was County Sheriff.

Christian Garlitz II, Hunter. In his book, Brown lists Meshack Browning, Christian Garlitz and Holmes Wiley as the great pioneer hunters of Western Allegany County.

"Christian Garlitz in his nature and character was strong, decided, emphatic and industrious; hardy and strictly honest; in comfortable circumstances, but no more. Ostensibly a farmer, but really he loved the deep forest more than his fields and meadows, and his rifle more than the plow or sythe. He was hospitable and sociable, fond of company and entertainment; his home was a lively place, and he always the central figure. His hunting anecdotes were inexhaustable and the delight of all, but everyone knew his statements must not be contradicted.

"Old Christy" carried his rifle and manipulated his traps for forty seasons, and only gave them up when infirmity and waning of the favorite game compelled him. Deer, bears, panthers and wolves were his staples, and he hardly ever condescended to anything smaller. Sometimes he would take a hand in reducing the number of such varmints' as wild cats, catamounts, foxes and coons.

"In his early days the beasts of prey were the terror of the sparse population, and the scourge of domestic animals. When a foray would be made upon the fold of these animals, Christian Garlitz would be sent for as a matter of course, just as a doctor would be called for a sick person. He killed a great many deer in his time, but only enough for his table, and such as he could conveniently sell.

He never would slay this beautiful animal wantonly, or out of season.

It has been protected by many statutes since 1789 - the first. But he was the untiring foe of the panther and the wolf - the latter he hated the worse. These animals have had a price upon their heads for almost as many years as their gentle victims has been protected."

Garlitz Hunting Stories (From Brown's Book)

Once Jesse Tomlinson had a lot of sheep killed by wolves near his home at the Little Meadows. Christly was sent for; in due time he and his traps were on hand and in a short time the whole pack of nine were caught.

Another time Tomlinson's favorite dog was missing; strange tracks upon the premises. Garlitz listened to the story and exclaimed at once, "A painter, sure as you live." Trusty rifle and shot-pouch quickly in place, he and his well-trained dogs were on the warpath. The panther, tracked to his lair and surprised while feasting on the missing dog, sprang up a large spruce tree, but the unfailing rifle brought his body crashing thru the boughs to the ground.

A poor settler far off in the woods had one of his two cows killed by wolves. The sufferer came down to Christly; the story was no more than half told till his ire was up. Three traps were brought forth, greased, smoked and set in the woods. One of the culprits was captured that night, and so on till the whole gang of seven were destroyed.

Brown here remarks "that great skill and strategy is required in trapping wolves - the wildest of quadrupeds.

About the year 1825, wolves became exceeding troublesome, raiding the country from their base - the famous Wolf Swamp and Meadow Mountain. They had the audacity to venture upon the premises of their old enemy and kill one of his cows - an insult and injury not to be overlooked. The slaughtered cow was hauled to a spring on the side of Meadow Mountain and a cordon of traps set. The campaign lasted a month, resulting in the capture of the whole pack, sixteen in number. Garlitz used his dead cow to bait the traps he was amply reimbursed in bounties, which were then \$15 for scalp of an old wolf, \$6 for a young one and \$5 for a panther. Last panther killed in this end of the county was killed by John

In the early part of his hunting life, Christian Garlitz shot an elk between the waters of Horse Pond and Savage. This was the last of the trace in this county; but their immense antlers in early times were frequently found. Christly shot his last panther near the Laurel Run. From nose to tip of tail it was as long as a fence rail - 11 feet. This beast had snatched a buck, which the old hunter was following, so he baited his trap with the remains of the deer and caught the big cat when it returned to feed.

"Tho' brave and fearless, old Christly always fought cautiously and according to his own rules, one of which was after firing, never to move a step till he had reloaded. Even wounded game is often dangerous to an unprepared hunter.

Unfortunately, Garlitz did not write a book as Browning did, but he "had a story or anecdote for any place, time or situation, nearly always of his own experience. No one dared exceed him. When a good one would be told by another he was always ready with a better one. Even his beloved 'Liss' had to bear some of his often told stories, one of which was something like this: During their early married life, his wife Elizabeth, went out 'after dusk' to milk her cows, one of which was a black mule. After milking one, she walked toward her mule, as she thought, but it trotted away with a heavy grunt. Verily it was a bear!"

Christian Garlitz III, 1790-1873

Christian III, son of Henry, was a nephew of Christian II. In his youth he crossed the State Line into Maryland and married Sarah McKenzie in 1815. They lived a few years in the neighborhood of his Uncle Christian II, then, in 1827, Christian Garlitz, son of Henry, bought of John Durst 50 acres of lots 13 and 21, and in 1837 "Christopher Garlitz" bought of Solomon Garlitz of Somerset County [PA] 129 acres of lot 13 for \$600.

"Walnut Hills"

This Garlitz farm was a part of the "Walnut Hills" tract, 4087 acres which belonged to John Swan of Baltimore. It lies on the east or Savage River slope of Meadow Mountain, known as the "McKenzie Settlement" until a post office was opened there in 1885 under the name of "Avilton." Swan divided "Walnut Hills" into 21 lots. It was a densely wooded region, largely white pine.

Christian's log house stood just below the spring near the present St. Ann's Church. Brown says:

"Tradition has it that in clearing a spot of ground around the house a perverse tree was felled upon it with the young wife inside. The anxious cry was 'Sally, are you hurt'? She was unhurt, but strange to say, more than fifty years after, good old Christy was killed in the woods by the fall of a tree.

Christian III was a small farmer and a great hunter in his day. It is possible that some of the stories of Christian Garlitz related in Brown's book refer to Christian III, who was also known as Christian, Jr., and Christopher, to distinguish him from his uncle Christian, on Chestnut Ridge.

Sarah Garlitz died and was buried in the Catholic Cemetery of Mt. Savage. Later Christian married Mrs. Harriet Layman Cleary. In 1844 he sold his farm to his son Henry, and went West, but returned a few years later to his old home on Pea Ridge (Avilton).

Children of Sarah Garlitz:

- 1) Samuel, 1816-1880, m. (1) Susan Blocher. (2) Isabel Minke: 16 children
- 2) Israel, 1817-1895, m. Ellen Robeson: 10 children.
- 3) John, m. Mary Garlitz: 11 children.
- 4) Henry, 1824-1903, m. Lucy McKenzie: 10 children.

Several other children died during an epidemic of scarlet fever. Samuel and Israel lived at Avilton on adjoining farms. John moved to the Laurel Hill in Pennsylvania. Henry bought the home farm, but sold it in 1859 to Leo and Jeremiah McKenzie. One of Israel's sons was Isadore, who married Matilda Elizabeth McKenzie; she inherited the old Garlitz farm from her father Jeremiah. Mrs. Garlitz was born in 1853; she enjoys good health at an advanced age and resides with her son, Orval J. Garlitz on the old homestead of Christian III.

Children of Harriet L. Garlitz:

- 1) Joseph, m. Ellen Brike.
- 2) One other child died in Ohio.

Christian's second wife was a Protestant. She is probably buried in the Blocher graveyard.
St. Ann's Church

The wife of Christian Garlitz III, Sarah McKenzie, Catholic; her husband became a loyal son of that church, as are his descendants of Avilton today.

About 1836 parish priest of St. Patrick's Church, Cumberland began a "mission" in the "McKenzie Settlement." It was probably the next year that Christian Garlitz added a spacious room to his log house at Walnut Hill known as

the "Church-house, which was to serve as a place of worship for the scattered Catholics of that section.

After Henry Garlitz sold the farm and "Church-house" mass was celebrated in the homes of Samuel and Lee McKenzie, and, in summer, in two school houses nearby.

In 1871 there were about fifteen Catholic families in the McKenzie settlement; it was then decided to build a church. Rev. Father Schmidt selected the site on the road at Walnut Hill, one hundred fifty rods northwest of the former "Church-house," or Garlitz homestead, where an acre of land for the purpose was donated by Jeremiah McKenzie and his wife Catherine.

On September 24, 1871, the new church cornerstone was laid. Christian Garlitz striking "the first lick. The carpenters were James McKenzie and Ozia Weimer. The building of St. Ann's is said to have cost \$2000 in addition to some labor and materials which were donated. It is a handsome, well built structure, nestling in a little pine grove at an altitude of 2770 feet. A well-kept cemetery is behind the church.

St. Ann's Church was dedicated Aug. 29, 1874, the occasion for a procession from Frostburg and mass in the new edifice, witnessed by a large assemblage from the surrounding country. In 1815 [sic] an addition to the site was purchased and a commodious hall erected, which serves as a community center for meetings and entertainments.

Good old Christian Garlitz was killed by the fall of a tree before the dedication of the new church, in which he took so much interest. Tho an old man, he insisted upon helping cut some timber near his home; he was struck on the head and died the same afternoon.

He is buried in St. Ann's Cemetery. A respectable marble shaft marks the resting place of his mortal remains:

Christian Garlitz
The Pioneer Settler
1790-1873

Reprinted from the Maryland Genealogical Bulletin, Winter 1999.

Reformatted: 22 March 2022
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