

DESCENDANTS
OF
ARCHIBALD McALLISTER,

OF
WEST PENNSBORO TOWNSHIP,

Cumberland County, Pa.

1730--1898.

BY
MARY CATHARINE McALLISTER.

— Harrisburg, Penn'a. :—
Scheffer's Printing & Bookbinding House,
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14—ARCHIBALD McALLISTER,³ (Richard,² Archibald,¹),—b. April 17, 1756; d. 1831, at Fort Hunter, Pa. The first record found of him is as a Captain of a Company in Colonel Hartley's Sixth Regiment of the Pennsylvania Line. He fought at Germantown and Monmouth. In the latter battle, though but 21 years of age, for gallantry, Gen. Washington, on the field presented him with a pair of silver mounted pistols, one of which is now the property of James H. McAllister,⁵ of Fort Hunter, Pa. He resigned his commission Nov. 19, 1777, and was married to Margaret Hays, April 1778. — (See Paxtang and Derry church records.)

He lived on a farm of 253 acres in Londonderry township, Lancaster county, now Dauphin. This farm came to him through his wife. (See Will of Hugh Hays appendix.) It is now owned by Martin L. Hershey, and is situated about three miles east of Derry church. The original limestone dwelling house is still standing.

In May 6, 1785, he removed to the farm of 150 acres, at Fort Hunter, on the Susquehanna river, six miles above Harrisburg, Pa., which he bought from a Mr. Chambers.

He had at that time no occupation but that of gentleman farmer, and coming out of the army, paid in Continental

money, worth at that time, sixteen cents on the dollar in the North and twelve cents in the South, he had to cast about for some way to make an income on which to raise an increasing family, so, in connection with the farm, he started an inn. Numerous specimens of this Continental money were framed and hung in the old library at Fort Hunter.

In the time of Archibald McAllister,³ Fort Hunter, as a farm, was very differently conducted than at the present time. Dotted all over it were houses erected for laboring men, and no one who asked Archie for work was refused. He employed all the boys and men in the vicinity, and the place became the centre of all the business done in the neighborhood.

He planted large orchards of peaches and apples, and vineyards of the finest varieties of grapes. The latter he made into wine, and having his own still, manufactured quantities of whiskey, peach brandy, and apple-jack. Most of these wines and liquors he sent to Philadelphia by team. Among some old papers in the possession of James H. McAllister,⁵ is a letter from Stephen Girard thanking Archibald for some very fine potatoes, sent him from Fort Hunter by his son. Another old paper is a recipe for making "cider royal," a famous drink at that time, specially invented by Archie.

All the wine manufactured was bottled, and put in the old stone ice-house, that stood on the hill near the mansion, the foundations of which are still standing. The ice-house, originally was of stone with a frame top, the lower compartment being filled with ice. The upper part was filled with shelves, on which were racks for holding the bottles with inverted necks.

In a letter from George Washington McAllister,⁴ of Savannah, Ga., to his father, Archibald,³ he mentions some whiskey sent to him from home, and some sent to Mr. McLeod, of Georgia. He says, in effect, "that his good friend McLeod, who is as temperate as he is sincere, says 'it is no sin to get drunk on the good old stuff from Fort Hunter,'" and that McLeod was so choice of his "that he will not try it until he sees mine out," and further adds, "that the brandy decanter is universally rejected now." (Letter from George Washington McAllister,⁴ to Archibald McAllister,³, dated Grahamville, S. C., August, 1821.

Archibald would not allow a snake to be molested on his premises, and in consequence, the servants and others were in constant terror from the immense black reptiles, sunning them-

selves on the arbors in the vineyard. A family legend says that he could stroke and fondle these snakes, and that they recognized the "master," and would not harm him. Some of the slaves declared that at Archibald's funeral, "the snakes followed to the graveyard, and wept as the body was lowered in the grave." This graveyard stands in the centre of the Fort Hunter farm, and contains four generations of the family.

He built a saw-mill and remodeled the old grist-mill, built in 1730. This saw-mill was the only one within a radius of forty miles, and furnished all the lumber for the Fort Hunter house, built in 1814, on the foundations of the English block house, called "Hunter's Fort," that stood there during the Revolution. The first mention of this site as a fort, was in 1755, when the commissioners thought that a company of fifty men, under the command of Captain Reed, was sufficient to to guard the frontier. (Frontier Forts, published by the State of Pennsylvania, 1896). The house which cost ten thousand dollars, a large sum in those days, was built of stone taken from the mountain land on the farm, and has been worth its money value many times. Without doubt it is to-day one of the finest old houses in this section of the country. The marble in the mantels came from Italy, one costing five hundred dollars, and the winding staircase was the first known in Central Pennsylvania. To-day it is in a perfect state of preservation, with the exception of a few alterations in the general arrangement.

The old tavern house, called "The Practical Farmer," changed by a wag in the neighborhood to "The Prodigal Farmer," was the older house. It was there in 1785 when Archibald McAllister bought the place, and was an old house at that time. It is supposed to have been built about the same time as the Hunter mill, in 1830, or prior to that time, and has been remodelled so many times that it is difficult to trace the original. Three generations of the McAllister family were born here.

In an old letter dated McAlister's Practical Farmer, 6mo., 24th, 1812, the writer says, in consequence of a rainy day he will remain "with the proprietor of this place who has entertained him very much with the history of his farming and his improvements."

Archibald McAlister,³ had a large and well-selected library, one room in Fort Hunter house was set apart for this purpose, with shelves reaching to the ceiling—among these books was "one of the few copies of the Bible printed in the reign of

Henry VIII, that escaped the flames, as appears by the following note: 'This testament was translated by Wm. Tyndall, who suffered martyrdom in Brabant in 1535, and this testament was burned in London in 1539 by Cuthbert Tonstall, Bishop of London; printed in MDXXXV ye 26 year of Henry ye 8th and finished ye fourth day of October.'" This Bible was bequeathed to the oldest son, George Washington McAllister, ⁴, who took it with him to his home in Georgia, together with a valuable collection of General Washington's letters to his father, Archibald McAllister, ³. "His whole library including this Bible, was destroyed during Sherman's march to the sea."