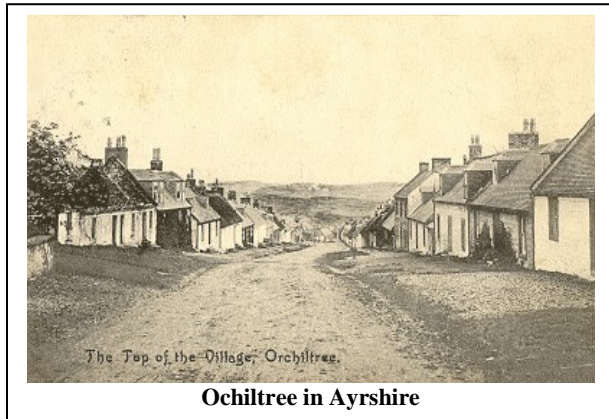


McCrie Family: Scottish Teacher from Ayrshire

The McCrie family comes from Ayrshire, a county located in the southwest of Scotland, just south of Glasgow. It is a damp place. Iaian, a researcher there and a distant cousin, told me that you can tell the weather in Ayrshire by looking west over the Firth of Clyde to the Isle of Arran. If you can see the Isle, it is going to rain. If you can't, then it is raining already. The poet Robert Burns was born in Alloway, only 13 miles from where the McCrie's originate, and many of his poems are about the area. In the early 1800's, most of Ayrshire was agricultural, but included some industries involving quarrying or mining for limestone and coal.



The earliest person I have found for the McCrie family is Hugh McCree, who was born about 1780 and worked as an agricultural worker. In 1801, he married Jean Brown of Ochiltree, a village of about 700 people, and they lived at Glaisnock Lots, a local farm. Jean's family also appears to have been of an agricultural background.

Their oldest son and our ancestor William McCrie was born in Ochiltree in 1803, and grew up to be a teacher. He was teaching in the

nearby town of Old Cumnock where he met and married 18 year old Margaret Miller in 1821.

Margaret Miller's parents were John Miller and Margaret Findlay. John died in a quarry accident when the daughter Margaret was only about 3 years old. An account of the accident was preserved in the 1815 edition of *The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, a journal of the time:

On Monday the 3d of April, a melancholy accident happened at Benston Lime Works, in the neighbourhood of Cumnock. When the men had begun to work in the morning, a lump of earth fell, which killed one man upon the spot, broke both the legs of another, and slightly hurt a third: what is remarkable in this case is, that John Miller, brother to Matthew Miller, the man who was unfortunately killed, was also killed at the same work, about ten weeks before, by an accident of the same kind. Both were stout able workmen, in the prime of life, and John has left a widow and two children to deplore his loss.

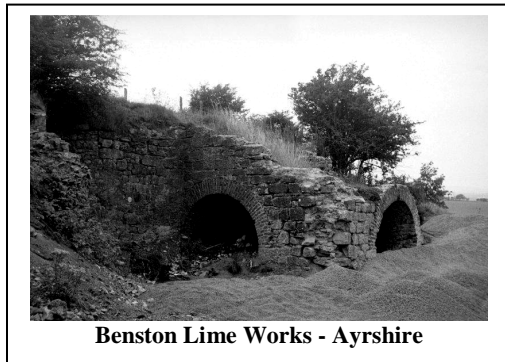
The brothers were buried together in the Old Cumnock Cemetery.

William and Margaret McCrie lived in Old Cumnock and William taught there for about 20 years. There were several



Grave of John and Matthew Miller, killed at Benston Lime Works 1815

schools—a main church sponsored schools, as well as five private schools. In addition, teachers taught night and winter classes to young farmers whose field duties kept them from the classroom. School was open every weekday, and also a half-day on Saturday. Classes offered to the students were English, Arithmetic, Writing, and Latin. In those days, church and school were partners and Bible was a part of the education. At the end of the year was the annual examination by the minister. It usually lasted several hours, and a small prize, for example a penknife, was given to the better scholars.



About 1840, the McCries moved to Galston, about 13 miles away, where William was the schoolmaster at a school at the Woodhead farm just outside of town. A survey of Ayrshire schools in 1847 reported that McCrie's school excelled in the use of the Bible in its curriculum. The Bible was used not only for teaching reading, but was studied together with the shorter catechism to teach the students the Christian faith and Biblical moral applications. The report said his school did not particularly shine in other aspects of education, but its use of the Bible was noteworthy. It was in

Galston that our ancestor Margaret (Maggie) McCrie was born in 1844.

I learned from Lori Hopper, a cousin and McCrie researcher, that William changed his name from McCree to McCrie in honor of a famous Scottish minister and theologian, Thomas McCrie. Thomas was a member of a Presbyterian sect called Anti-Burghers. In this light it is interesting that one of the church records indicated that the William McCrie family was Burghers, apparently in contrast to most of the other members of the Church. Both Burghers and Anti-Burghers were members of the Church of Scotland, and the division was over the degree of separation of church and state. Anti-Burghers were opposed to any obligation of state to church or church to state. The division came down to, among other things, whether to take this oath – “I profess and allow with my heart the true religion presently professed within this realm and authorized by the laws thereof.” Burghers consented to the oath. Anti-Burghers considered that it was not the state that authorized the church and refused. William may have had to take the oath in order to get his teaching position.

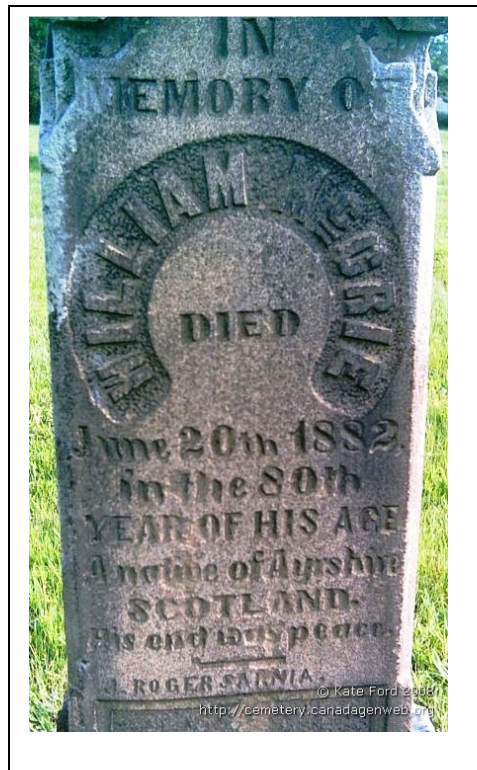
Typically, schoolmasters were paid by each student, according to how many of subjects the student studied. This tended to limit the amount a teacher could make to about £30 to £40 per year, which compares with £7 to £10 per year earned by laborers and tradesmen in the town. It is perhaps this limitation, together with the prospect of obtaining land in Canada that persuaded the family to immigrate to Hamilton, Ontario by way of Quebec about 1853. He was the only one out of his parents or siblings to leave Scotland for America. When William was about 50 years old, he and his wife then decided to take their family to America. He packed his wife and children and reached Hamilton by way of Quebec in 1853.

William worked in Hamilton for two years as a foreman on public works projects, and then moved to Sarnia in Lambton County, Ontario. William had been well educated in

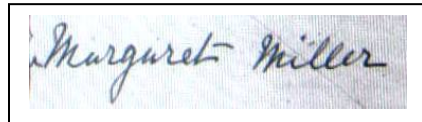
Scotland and had been a school teacher there, so he again took up the career in Sarnia and in Moore Townships. He bought a tract of wild land in Sarnia Township (conc. 2, lot 1), and while he continued to teach, his sons cleared the land and built their home on it.

This farm in 1871 was a total of 200 acres, 50 acres of which were developed for crops. Their production was rather modest, producing summer and winter wheat, barley, and oats. He harvested about 20 bushels of apples from his orchard.

William died from heart disease on June 20, 1882, listed in the records as a farmer. His wife Margaret died from a broken hip in 1887 at the age of 75. William and Margaret's daughter Maggie married Walter Miller.



Margaret McCrie



Margaret McCrie, called Maggie by friends and family, was born April 2, 1844 in Galston of Ayrshire County, Scotland. When Maggie was about 9 years old, she and her brothers and sisters emigrated to Canada with her parents, William and Margaret McCrie. They settled near Sarnia in Lambton County, Ontario.

The McCrie household had two daughters and six sons. The oldest daughter Jane married about 1860, leaving 16 year old Maggie the only daughter at home. I suspect that Maggie had a lot of responsibilities at home and wasn't free to marry. Or perhaps the right person never came along.

Whatever the reason, Maggie did not marry until December 20, 1878 at age 34. Her husband was Walter Miller, one of John and Janet Miller's five sons. The McCrie farm was located within two farms of the Miller family farm, so Maggie would have grown up knowing all the Millers. In 1866, Walter had moved from Sarnia to Chatham Township to marry Elizabeth Graham. Elizabeth died in 1877, and 18 months later Walter married his old neighbor Maggie. Maggie inherited a family of 5 boys, all less than 11 years old, and together she and Walter had three more children.

Walter and Maggie were members of the Knox Church in Chatham, and Mary Oliver Lloyd gave a description of "old Mrs. Miller" in the Church service. She wrote, "There were Mrs. McKay and Mrs. Miller with their little flash bonnets with a pansy tie and the funny little bobbing black things that stuck out on top, the black satin ribbons were tied in bows beneath their chins. It was old Mrs. Miller who objected to the Book of Praise."

This objection was a story that Granny often told. The Scottish church had traditionally sung psalms translated into rhyme, and an example still in use today is the pretty "The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want." But changes were coming, and Granny told me this story of her Grandmother Miller's objection to the new Presbyterian hymn book.

Granny said, "I can quote a lot of the Psalms, Psalm 23, Psalm 24, and lots of others. For me it's nostalgia, really.

"You've heard the old story about my grandmother. My Grandmother Miller, the first church she went to, they didn't have a musical instrument of any kind. They had a presenter and a tuning fork. The presenter hit the tuning fork and the congregation then sang the song. He got to be the presenter and led the singing because he owned the tuning fork.

"There were two churches, one where my mother and father went and this other one where my Scottish grandmother went. They were only a mile apart, both Presbyterian churches, the Knox and the Chalmers Churches. My mother, father, and the Olivers went to Chalmers, my Grandmother Miller and a lot of the older Scotch people went to Knox. At Chalmers, they had a pump organ you pump with your feet. My mother played the hymns for church. They had a choir and were more modern. And so they started to get a thing going at the Knox Church whereby *they* would buy an organ. They were probably too tight to buy one to start with. You know, this organ probably cost about \$50 back then, I suppose.

"But they had a congregational meeting talking about it, and they were going to do away with the psalms, just sing hymns. And my Grandmother got up and threw her shoulders back and they say she put her head up in the air and she said "I have sung the Psa'ms of David all of my life, and I shall continue to do so." This is the story that has been passed down for ages and ages. That was my Grandma Miller. And I guess that accounts for why I have a special regard for the Psalms."

Maggie’s husband died in 1900, and she went to live on the farm with her son George. In February of 1921, Maggie experienced a blood clot in a major leg artery which developed into gangrene. Maggie died March 6, 1921. She is buried together with Walter and first wife Elizabeth in McVicar’s Cemetery in Chatham Township.

James Matthew McCrie



James McCrie in Egypt ~1900

Lori Hopper called to my attention to a side branch of the family, where Maggie’s brother Matthew had a son born in 1879 named James Matthew McCrie. Jim worked for an oil company and his work took him far away for long periods from his wife Maude and their three children in Sarnia. Jim was working in Egypt in 1912 drilling for oil, and had been there about 18 months when he learned that his wife was very ill. He sought to rush home to her, and, according to the story, a friend offered Jim his own ticket home on a new and fast ocean liner. Jim enjoyed second class travel on the luxury ship, but the Titanic struck an iceberg and sank April 14, 1912. Jim was drowned and his body was never identified among those

recovered. The people of Sarnia organized a relief fund for his widow and children. Maude never remarried, but moved to Michigan after her children were grown.



The Titanic sank April 14, 1912

Queenie McCrie

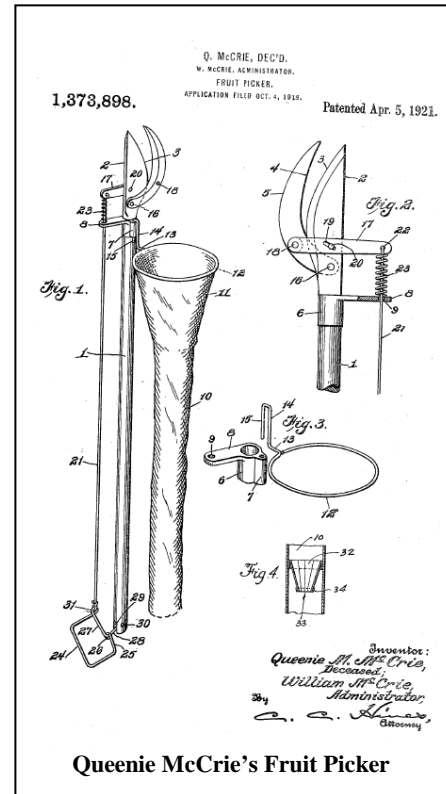
Queenie McCrie was an inventor in this family of farmers. She was born December 21, 1887 in Sarnia, the daughter of William McCrie, Jr. and therefore the niece of Maggie McCrie.

Sometime around 1915, Queenie developed a concept to improve the picking of fruit from trees. It seeks to avoid the use of ladders for picking, and also prevent the fruit from striking the ground. Robert Frost in his “After Apple Picking” wrote:

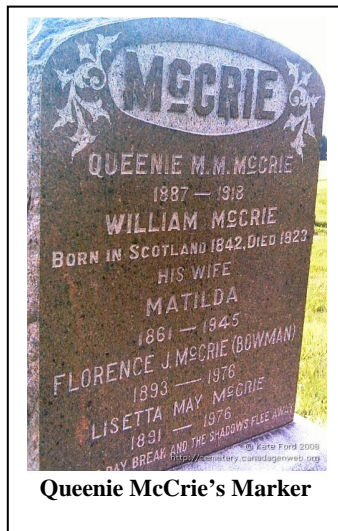
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,
 Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall,
 For all
 That struck the earth
 No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
 Went surely to the cider-apple heap
 As of no worth.

Queenie's invention incorporated a long pole with a spring loaded shears at the top. The shears could be closed with an operating rod to cut the fruit stem. The fruit then fell into a long cloth funnel to tumble gently to the picker below.

Sadly, Queenie died from the flu epidemic November 1918, one month shy of her 31st birthday. I think it was in her honor, then, to help her finally accomplish a lifelong goal, that Queenie's father the next year applied for a patent in her name. That patent was granted in the US in 1921, in Canada in 1922.



Queenie McCrie's Fruit Picker



Queenie McCrie's Marker

Her father William did not benefit financially from the invention. He assigned all rights to the patent to May, Queenie's sister, and to a William O Sheets of Alberta. I do not know how Sheets related to this process.

In actuality, I am not sure that anyone benefited financially from the patent. I found no ads for sale of fruit pickers, and no later patents referred to this invention. However, the invention achievement stands as a memory of this young woman.

Queenie is buried beside her parents and two sisters in the Bunyan Cemetery in Sarnia.

Source: Email from Doug Boylan (husband of Margaret McCrie's great-granddaughter Sandi) to Jamie Schutze, 16 August 2012, subject: RE: McCrie.

Mr. Boylan extracted and sent this chapter from a family history book he wrote.