

## William McGinnis in the war of 1812

*Contributed by Glen Haney bud at ncweb.com*

The late Homer Baker of Greenup Ky., compiled a good deal of historical and genealogical information concerning the McGinnis families. Transcribed here are two documents relating to William McGinnis, the progenitor of the McGinnis line of Greenup and Carter County Kentucky.

The first document is an excerpt relating to Williams time in service as a marine in serving under the command of Admiral Commodore Perry in the war of 1812. It is understood that these writings were not penned by William McGinnis himself but were written by Pearl McGinnis, a descendent of William. The information was presumably based on family lore.

William was in the battle of Perry's Victory on Lake Erie. He told how they were building the ships for Perry's fleet on the shore of Lake Erie. Captain Green who was his commanding officer at the time was known to have been a very strict man. One night the weather was very bad and Captain Green had to make his inspection. He wanted to make it short so he went out by one guard and came back by McGinnis. William said he knew Captain Green as soon as he came up but his orders were to hold all comers to [until] the officer of the guard released them. He did just that. The following day he had orders to go after some cattle. On his way Captain Green jumped him about what had happened the night before and William told the Captain he had followed orders and they had words. Captain Green drew his sword as if to hit him. William drew his gun to protect himself. One of the men nearby grabbed the gun and William's finger was on the trigger and it went off and blew the Captains ear off.

William was arrested and put between two guards on the bank of Lake Erie where they were building the ships. Perry's flagship the Niagara was here. William had met Perry before and knew him to be a just man and not knowing what might happen to him William thought if he could reach Perry's ship he could stand a better chance so he pushed one guard one way and one the other way. He then jumped down on the workmen And guards did not fire upon him as they were afraid they might hit the workmen. Then he was able to get to Perry's ship. He told Commodore Perry what had happened and Perry agreed that William had done his duty but Perry told him he would have to surrender to him until a trial could be had. The guards came after him but Perry refused to give him up. He told them he was his prisoner and I intend to see that he has a fair trial. The guards started on the ship to take him. Perry ordered the cannons to be manned and said we will have war here. So the guards left.

The trial was held in Erietown, Pa. Perry found the man who had grabbed William's gun and he told how it happened. Therefore William was cleared. Later William and Commodore Perry had their picture taken for the newspaper.

How much of the above is fact or fiction is hard to say. The ability to take pictures would not come along until long after this account was to have occurred. Indeed, photographs were not used in newspapers until around 1890. Such a glaring fault by the author casts a shadow over the entire document.

The document below is likely a more accurate assessment of Williams role in the war. Here, William is filing for a service pension.

MAY TERM OF GREENUP COUNTY, KENTUCKY, COURT, MAY 5, 1851 (Order Book H, page 276)

William McGinnis came into open court, and made oath that he is the identical William McGinnis who served as a private soldier in Capt. McLain's company.

That he enlisted in the aforesaid company on or about the 10th day of May 1813 at Brownsville, Pennsylvania and marched on to Pittsburg where the company received their arms, and that his said company marched from Pittsburg to Erie at the mouth of the Cascade creek. That his company he disremembers, but this Major's name was Green. And that he remained at the mouth of Cascade under Captain Thomas, and was employed in putting down timbers in the Lake Erie to raise the Big Niagara and Lawrence and he helped to build several gun Boats beside the raising of the Niagara and Lawrence and that he continued in said company that he enlisted or was transferred to Capt. or Lieutenant John Brooks' company of the Marines under Commodore Perry, and that he stood the inspection by Surgeon Auster or Austler and was admitted a stout hearty man. That the fleet to which he belonged moved down from the mouth of the Cascade into the main Lake. To accomplish which he was compelled to sink two scows to cross the bar. This was in August of first of September 1813. That about that time he was compelled to sleep in his wet close (clothes), upon him in his hammock which he could not avoid. That the morning of the 3rd day he was taken sick occasioned by cold & exposure whilst bailing the scows in the lake whilst in actual service and that on or about the 8th or 9th of September 1813 he was taken to the hospital at Erie. That he was there attended by Surgeon Austler and Doct. Parsons. That his sickness continued for several months. That on a certain day, the date he has forgotten, doct. Parsons & Surgeon Austler came into sick room and Surgeon asked him (McGinnis) to raise up out of his sick bed, and Surgeon Austler said to him (McGinnis) Are you able to go through an examination and get to your home in Pennsylvania? If you, Mr. McGinnis, are unable to go, we are bound to take care of you, and Surgeon Austler remarked that he would consult his superior officers and get a discharge and money to take him, McGinnis, home, and that shortly afterwards sergeant Austler returned with a written honorable discharge and \$10 in money. Which is all the pay he ever received except the bounty, and that Surgeon Curtis said to him (McGinnis) that if he ever recovered from his illness he could at this pleasure report him self to the marine corps. That he the said (McGinnis) doth state that he has never recovered his health, but has for many years been afflicted with palsy or apoplexy, being continually shaking in the neck and head. Which disease he verily believes was occasioned by exposure in the cold & wet whilst in actual service of his country on Lake Erie. That he is now old and infirm and palsied and nearly blind from cataracts or scum having nearly covered his eyes occasioned by being afflicted. That he still remains debilitated having very little use of his limbs. that he has paid large

sums at different times to Physicians, that he has been at great expense & inconvenience from the disability, that he is totally unable by infirmities to obtain a support and that at this advance age (64) [this stated age conflicts with date of birth given in family data which follows] he is thrown on the charity of his friends. He has obtained no pay or pension whatever from the government in any state whatever, having hoped to live without his countries aid. That he now makes this declaration in order to obtain a pension and prays that he may be placed on the pension roll of invalid pensioners.  
(signed) William McGinnis

We, Charles J. Crooks, minister of the Gospel & William Warnock, Esq. do certify that we have long known the old man McGinnis and believe him to be an honest & honorable old gentleman. That was are his neighbors, and that he is creditable and highly respected in his neighborhood. That the said William McGinnis is afflicted with a disease resembling the palsy. That he is poor & aged.  
(Signed) Chas J. Crooks DD  
William Warnock