

Cover Sheet

Overview

This is a chapter from the fourth edition of the e-book “**In Search of the Turkey Foot Road: Unraveling the mystery, charting new history, plotting the route**” (2014). To access other chapters, see the [online table of contents](#).

As described on pages 3 to 6 of [Addendum A](#), the fourth edition mistakenly claims that a dashed line route on the 1755 Fry and Jefferson map is an antecedent to the Turkey Foot Road. Shortly after publication, I realized that the dashed lines actually represent Christopher Gist’s second Ohio Company Tour. If that or another known mistake affects this or another chapter of the book, the relevant text will be highlighted in yellow, and the mistake will be briefly described in a comment that is accessible via a clickable comment icon.

In this and other chapters of the book, any supplemental information will be provided via clickable comment icons, inserted yellow sheets, or other readily identifiable means.

L. Dietle

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20. A Catholic church on the Turkey Foot Road

A small Catholic church was built at Arnold's Hotel

The 1900 book “**A Century of Growth: or, The History of the Church in Western Maryland**” ([Appendix 0056](#)) provides a detailed 1900 history of Saint Ignatius Church. It mentions an early church that was connected with Arnold's Hotel, and the subsequent Saint Ignatius Church at the nearby cemetery location. The book states:

The old parish of Mt. Savage was first known by the name of “Arnold's Settlement”, after Archibald Arnold, the proprietor of a hotel located on the old road called the “Turkey Foot Road”. Arnold was the father of the venerable Mrs. Cronin, and the grandfather of Rev. John Cronin, the celebrated Redemptorist priest. To Mrs. Cronin and Father Cronin, her learned son, we are indebted for many facts connected with the history of this grand old parish.

The first Mass celebrated at Arnold's Settlement was said at the home of Archibald Arnold, by the Rev. Stephen Theodore Badin,⁴⁸³ in the year 1793...the first church was built at “the Settlement.” “It was very small—not much larger than a decent-sized parlor. It was connected with the Arnold Hotel, and on the side opposite the altar was the old-time regulation fireplace.

Some individuals have apparently interpreted the above passage to mean the original church was physically connected to Arnold's Hotel. A more natural wording for a physical connection would have been “*connected to*”. The actual phrase “*connected with*” could also simply mean that the building was made available to the public by the generosity of the proprietors of the Arnold Hotel. We do not know which meaning was intended.

A section of the 1900 book discusses Father Francis Xavier Marshall, and states:

During the six years of his pastorate he built a new brick church, and as Father Marshall was an ex-Jesuit, he dedicated the church under the name of St. Ignatius. The lot on which the church stood was donated by Archibald Arnold, and is still a part of St. Patrick's Cemetery. The old portion of the cemetery was the church-yard proper, given by Mr. Arnold;⁴⁸⁴ the new portion was given by Hon. John S. Combs about the year 1878.

In the preceding passage, John S. Combs was the individual who had the J. S. Combs gristmill that is identified on the 1875 map of Allegany County that is included as [Figure 0045](#).

⁴⁸³ Edwin Wood's 1918 book “**Historic Macinac**” states: “Father Stephen Theodore Badin was the first priest to be ordained within the limits of the thirteen original States. As a pioneer missionary of Kentucky, he is said to have “lived in the saddle,” travelling more than 100,000 miles during his service there, beginning with the half century following the year 1793. He was born at Orleans, France, in 1768; died in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1853. In 1904, his body was removed to the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, he having secured the property for this great institution of learning.”

⁴⁸⁴ In a deed recorded April 17, 1857, from Thomas Devecmon and his wife Althea to John S. Combs, it is noted that a small parcel of Jonathan Arnold's ground had been given to the Roman Catholic Church by his heirs (Deed Book 15, pages 565 and 566). This seems to be a reference to the site of the Saint Ignatius church and cemetery. Since at least one tombstone there ([Figure 0377](#)) predates Archibald Arnold's death by approximately a decade, it seems likely that Archibald donated the ground informally and allowed the building and cemetery to be built, and then the land donation was formalized in legal terms by his son Jonathan's heirs.

An 1844 article estimates settlement date, describes the first church

Page 675 of the January 1844 issue of “**The United States Catholic Magazine and Monthly Review**” has an article that estimates that Arnold’s settlement was established circa 1774, and describes the local church history. It states that the first church was small, and built of stone:

Arnold’s Settlement.—This settlement, eight miles west of Cumberland was made about seventy years ago. Situated on the east side of Savage mountain, it enjoys all the advantages of a rural and mountainous district. Though one thousand feet higher than Cumberland, the climate is pleasant. The soil is strong, producing all the variety of crops common to the same latitude. Under the surface are inexhaustible bodies of iron and bituminous coal. The Mount Savage iron works, erected here on a most extensive scale, are in successful operation, giving employment to more than five hundred hands, and drawing around them, a population numbering about fifteen hundred persons. In the early stage of the settlement the holy sacrifice of mass was offered up in a private house. At length a small stone church was built by the Rev. Mr. Zocchi. For more than thirty years the faithful worshipped in it, when the Rev. Mr. Marshall replaced it by a commodious brick one, fifty by thirty feet, which was dedicated by the Most Rev. Archbishop Whitfield, Dec. 29th, 1833. This itself proving too small for the present numerous congregation, an enlargement of forty feet to the front has been commenced. On the second and fourth Sundays of the month mass is celebrated here. Above eighty children attend Sunday school.

The preceding article was written only 10 years after the new church was built, so it was likely based on interviews with people who were personally familiar with the small stone church building, and local church history. No known trace of the small stone church remains today—unless the old fireplace described in Chapter 22 is a remnant of it.

The small church had an old-time fireplace

Many books indicate that Stephen Theodore Badin was the first priest to be ordained in the United States. One such book, the 1914 “**The Catholic Church in the United States of America**”, also describes the first church building at Arnold’s Settlement as being “*a very small building with an old time fireplace*”. The description follows:

The thriving railroad town of Mount Savage was originally known as Arnold Settlement⁴⁸⁵; Mass was said there in 1792 for the first time by Rev. Stephen Theodore Badin, the first priest ordained in the United States, in the home of Archibald Arnold. Later the settlement was visited by Revs. Nicholas Zocchi (1810) of Taneytown; Matthew Ryan (1812) of Hagerstown; Timothy Ryan (1819) who built the first church, a very small building with an old time fireplace; Francis Ruloff (1824); and Francis X. Marshall (1829) of St. Mary’s, Cumberland. Father Marshall replaced the modest church with a new brick one, on a lot donated by Archibald Arnold, and dedicated it to St. Ignatius. This lot forms part (1914) of St. Patrick’s cemetery, the new portion being donated in 1878 by Honorable John S. Combs. During Father Marshall’s pastorate, the congregation grew rapidly through emigrants who were attracted by the development of the iron industry, and an

⁴⁸⁵ This statement, and similar statements in other church-related books, seem to have confused many into thinking that the physical site of the town was **the** site of Arnold’s Settlement. Such statements probably have as their foundation the fact that the Catholic parish that eventually became known as the Mount Savage parish was still called Arnold’s Settlement as late as 1866. The American parish register in the 1866 book “**Catholic directory, almanac and registry of Ireland, England and Scotland**” states: “*Mount Savage or Arnold’s Settlement, Allegheny Co., St. Ignatius*”— Rev. Richard Browne.”

enlargement of the church was necessary. After his departure in 1834 the priests at St. Mary's continued to attend Mt. Savage until Archbishop Eccleston (about 1845) appointed Rev. Charles C. Brennan first resident pastor, with Eckhart, Barrelville, and Wellersburg as missions. Rev. James Carney succeeded in December, 1855, and, during his time, the old site was abandoned, a new church being erected in Mt. Savage Valley.

A 1909 description of the small Catholic church

An article titled “*Sketch of St. Patrick's Church Mt. Savage, MD*” on page 129 of the 1909 book “**The Catholic red book of Western Maryland**” states:

Definite Catholic history begins in Mt. Savage with the first Mass said at Arnold's Settlement (now Mt. Savage) by Rev. Stephen Theodore Bodin in 1793. The settlement was named for Archbishop Arnold, whose grandson Rev. John Cronin, afterward became celebrated as a Redemptorist priest. Rev. Father Bodin, with whom begins the church history of Mt. Savage, was the first priest ordained in this country — May 25, 1793. His death occurred in 1853. Like every fruitful seed, the first Mass grew into more frequent Masses. Before the erection of a church services were held in Arnold's Hotel.

Rev. Nicholas Zocchi, an Italian of profound learning, frequently visited our little town, his home station being Taneytown, where he died in 1845. Afterward (1832) the settlement was visited by Rev. Matthew Ryan, of Hagerstown. In 1819 the mission was in charge of Rev. Timothy Ryan, who visited the mission about four times a year for five years. Father Ryan died in Hagerstown in 1837. During these visits the first church was built — not a large one — scarcely larger than an ordinary room — but still a church. About 1824 the settlement was visited during the year by Rev. Francis Roloff, who was the eleventh seminarian enrolled at St. Mary's Seminary.

Rev. Francis Xavier Marshall in 1829 took charge of the settlement conjointly with his pastorate at St. Patrick's, Cumberland. During this period a new brick church was built, which Father Marshall, an ex-Jesuit, named St. Ignatius. The lot on which the church stood is now a part of St. Patrick's Cemetery, and was given by Archbishop Arnold.

In the preceding passage, “*Archbishop Arnold*” is probably a typographical error. It is easy to imagine someone misreading “*Archibald Arnold*” in a handwritten draft, and then setting the type to read “*Archbishop Arnold*”. The last sentence in the passage indicates that the church building was already gone by 1909. Clearly, there are discrepancies among the various accounts of church history. The 1844 article, being written 65 years earlier than this one, may merit more confidence.

The old Catholic cemetery along the Turkey Foot Road

The 1804 route of the Turkey Foot Road went past the present-day Saint Ignatius Cemetery, which is at location “8” on [Figure 0038](#). [Figure 0110](#) is a 2010 photo that shows the view from the cemetery, looking eastward. One of the older legible tombstones is that of a Mrs. John Mattingly, who died at age 47 in 1823 ([Figure 0377](#)). The cemetery is still in use by the present-day Saint Patrick Catholic Church.

A bronze plaque ([Figure 0074](#)) at the cemetery, titled “*St. Ignatius Church 1793-1863*”, indicates that the first mass was held near that location in 1793. Although plaques are not always completely accurate (and this one has some conflicts with other sources of church information), it states:

Mass was first celebrated in Mt. Savage on this spot in 1793 by Rev. Stephen Theodore Badin, at the home of Archibald Arnold. Father Badin was the first priest to be ordained in the United States. About 1825 St. Ignatius Church was built on this site and served the early pioneers until being replaced by St. Patrick's in 1863. Wamba Caravan 89 Order of Alhambra 1997.

It is difficult to believe that the church at the cemetery was located at the same place as Arnold's house, which is what the plaque seems to indicate. It may just be a poorly worded sentence, and "on this spot" may have been intended to simply mean that the events occurred on the same farm. [Figure 0376](#) shows a view of the nearby site of the former Archibald Arnold farmstead, as seen from the cemetery.

The plaque quoted above is a replacement to an older one that stated that the Saint Ignatius Church was located at the cemetery. The church site is still clearly visible today; the sloped terrain was excavated to create a level building site (Figures [0109](#), [0123](#), [0157](#)). The oldest gravestones, which are mostly unreadable, are located directly behind the leveled area. The few gravestones within the leveled area are dated much later; the oldest one is dated 1882. This helps to confirm that a building was once located on the leveled site (Latitude 39.705959°, Longitude -78.872392°).

The church site may indicate that the road was reasonably well traveled in its heyday. In regard to the Saint Ignatius Church, the June 1972 issue of the "**Heritage Press**" states:

...families traveling on foot, extra-ordinary distances to attend Sunday Mass. Descendants of these families relate that their forbearers from as far distant as Salisbury, Pa., and Pompey Smash (now Vale Summit, Md.) walked barefooted to church to conserve shoe leather, carrying their shoes, to become worn only upon entering the church.

It is 6.3 miles from Vale Summit to the old location of the church. Today, it is about 15.9 miles from Salisbury on foot. Along these same lines, a March 31, 2010 note from Francis Bridges ([Figure 0386](#)), in support of this book, states:

Margaret (Peggy) Weimer Robinson [sic] wife of James Robinson...of the Robinson Farm in Mount Savage. The farm was once owned by Archibald Arnold.

Margaret told me that her Grandfather Ozias Weimer⁴⁸⁶ lived in Pocahontas Pa when the Saint Ignatius Church was holding services. The church was located at the Catholic cemetery on the Robinson Farm. She told me that her Grandfather would walk from Pocahontas to the Church to

⁴⁸⁶ Ozias Weimer is editor Nancy E. Thoeig's great-grandfather. Nancy's mother Mary (Weimer) Thoeig is the eldest of Mrs. Robison's six sisters. Nancy provided the following information on the family (gathered from The Weimer Genealogical Center, St. Ignatius Catholic Church records, obituaries, and Garlitz.org): Ozias Weimer is Johannes Weimer's great-great-grandson, and Johannes Weimer is Martin Weimer's brother. These Weimer brothers emigrated from their homeland in Langensoultzbach, France (in Alsace, on the border with Germany) in the 1760s and eventually settled in Greenville Township. Johannes Weimer served at Valley Forge in the Revolutionary War, and first settled on 336 acres of "bounty land," which he named Prospect Hill, in Rockwood, Milford Township, Somerset County, Pennsylvania. In 1785, Johannes and his family helped found Samuel's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Somerset, now a part of the New Centerville Lutheran Parish. Ozias was the eldest of 12 children born to Samuel K. Weimer and Drucilla Ann McKenzie, descendant of Gabriel McKenzie, one of the first settlers at Arnold's Settlement. Drucilla raised all her children Catholic (four were baptized at St. Ignatius in Mount Savage), while Samuel remained a faithful member of the Church of the Brethren. Samuel is buried at the Hochstettler Cemetery, Greenville Township. Drucilla is buried at Saint Michael's Catholic Cemetery in Frostburg, Maryland. Ozias is buried at St. Michael's Catholic Cemetery in Salisbury, Pennsylvania. Ozias was a farmer, sawmill operator, and carpenter. He built several houses in Frostburg, and with the help of his sons John and Lawrence, assisted James McKenzie as carpenter to build Saint Ann's Catholic Church in Avilton, Maryland. The land at McKenzie Settlement, a mission of the Catholic church in Cumberland since about 1836, was donated by Jeremiah McKenzie and his wife Catherine. The cornerstone was laid September 24, 1871, and the church was dedicated August 29, 1874.

build the Fire to heat the church For services. He would walk across Big Savage mountain on the old stage coach Road or possibly the Turkey Foot Road. Margaret told me this around 2005-2006.

In my opinion, that was no small Feat. I wonder how many People would be that dedicated today?

The church is about 8.6 miles from Pocahontas by foot.

To help to date the story, Ozias Weimer's obituary was located. According to the obituary, Ozias was born on October 20, 1847 and died July 14, 1941 at the Greenville Township family home. The Saint Ignatius church was replaced by St. Patrick's in Mount Savage. Ozias' story almost certainly took place before the 1865 dedication of Saint Patrick's. The previously mentioned 1882 tombstone that is located on the leveled Saint Ignatius building site indicates that the building there had already been razed by 1882.

