

# MCCART MET CHRISTY AND THE REST WAS HISTORY

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Special to the Ohio Swirl

In 1899 two Cleveland entrepreneurs combined forces to form the largest wholesale grocery company in Northern Ohio, a business that specialized particularly in whiskey sales. The two were Edward E. McCart (Fig. 1) and Henry C. Christy (Fig. 2).



EDWARD MCCART,  
GEN. MGR. THE MCCART-CHRISTY CO., WHOLESALE GROCERS

Figure 1



HENRY C. CHRISTY

Figure 2

McCart was born in Cleveland in 1863, the son of Patrick and Mary McCoy McCart, Irish immigrants who had settled in the city by Lake Erie during the 1840s. He was sent to the Cathedral School for his elementary education and Spencerian College, a business school where he was said to "study the commercial branches." Christy was older than his partner by 17 years. He was born in 1846 in Trumbull County, Ohio, and educated in local public schools.

At age 16 McCart went to work for the William Edwards & Co., a leading Cleveland wholesale grocery, one with a thriving business selling whiskey along with other products. He remained with that house for twenty years steadily advancing up the corporate ladder as he matured. A biographer said of him: *"His long years of service there mean two things chiefly: first, he must have proved his worth and ability; secondly, his employers must have appreciated his faithfulness, honesty, and capacity. That their relations were always pleasant attested the qualities of both."*

In the meantime, McCart was having a personal life. During the early 1880s he married Genevieve O'Brien, the daughter of Margaret and Patrick O'Brien, Irish immigrants to Cleveland. The couple would be childless. The 1990 census found them living on East Prospect Avenue, with a servant girl.

Christy took a different path. At age 21 in 1865 he began a career in the hardware business, and with a partner established the firm of Kirk & Christy in Warren, Ohio. The company flourished and became a major regional provider of lumber. In 1893 he created a branch of the business in Cleveland, incorporating the firm there in 1895. By this time Christy had become very wealthy. He organized the Empire Lumber Company in Buffalo, New York, and the Standard Brick Company of Cleveland, the latter said to have been able to produce 100,000 bricks per day. He also was vice president of the National Union Bank in Cleveland.

By 1899 and the age of 36 McCart had accumulated sufficient experience to strike out on his own in the grocery business. He had met Christy along the way and the older man recognized an opportunity so he provided the bankroll and McCart the know-how. The McCart-Christy firm was born, first located at 48-54 Huron Street. As it grew, it moved to 186-194 Huron. By 1903 the company had eclipsed the Edwards Co. and other competitors and was accounted the largest wholesale grocery firm in Cleveland and all of Northeast Ohio. McCart's prominence was highlighted by his being chosen in 1905 for a caricature as

a local business leader. It shows him firmly astride his company headquarters (Fig. 3).



Edward MCCART  
The McCart-Christy Company

Figure 3



Figure 4

Liquor was a mainstay of McCart-Christy, sold under the name "Lakewood Beverages." The flagship brand was Star Medal Rye (Fig. 4) shown here on an unusual painted label back of the bar bottle.

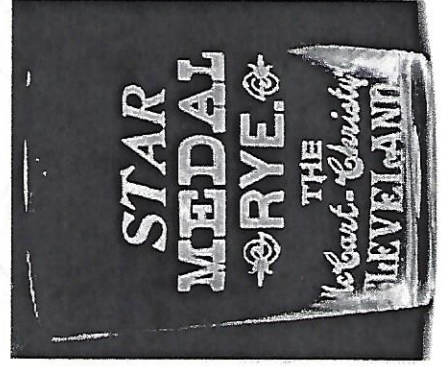


Figure 5



Figure 6

Other house brands, all of them likely blended on the premises, included: "Fencing Club Rye," "Our Special," and "Shakespeare." Like many of their Cleveland competitors McCart-Christy Co. issued shots glasses to saloons carrying their liquor. The glasses advertised several of these brands (Fig 5-7). The firm also handed out advertising corkscrews to favored customers (Fig. 8).

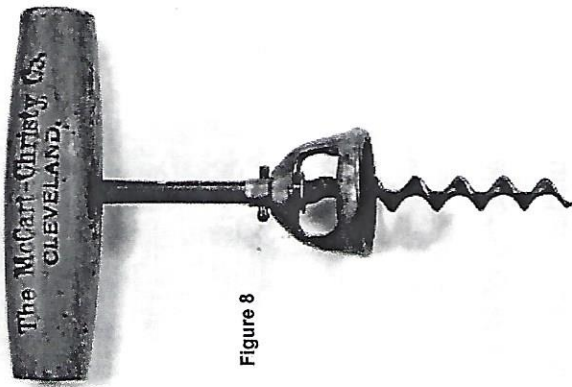


Figure 8

Figure 7

McCart-Christy also featured several lines of proprietary grocery products. In 1900 the firm trademarked "Colonial" for its brands of coffee. As shown here in a 1903 ad, a principal label was "Macrisco," an anagram of the partner's names (Fig. 9). Included in this line were fruit preserves, salad dressings, olive oil and olives. Macrisco also featured rubber canning jar rings (Fig. 10). These and other products proved to be very successful.

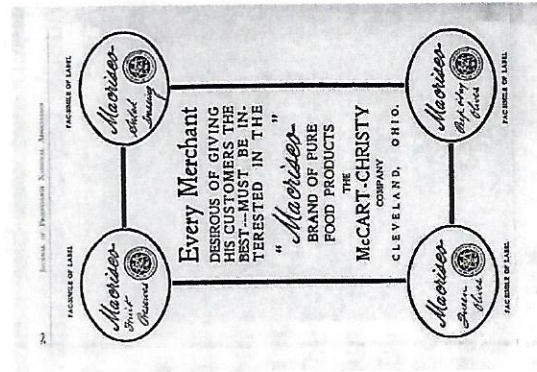


Figure 9