

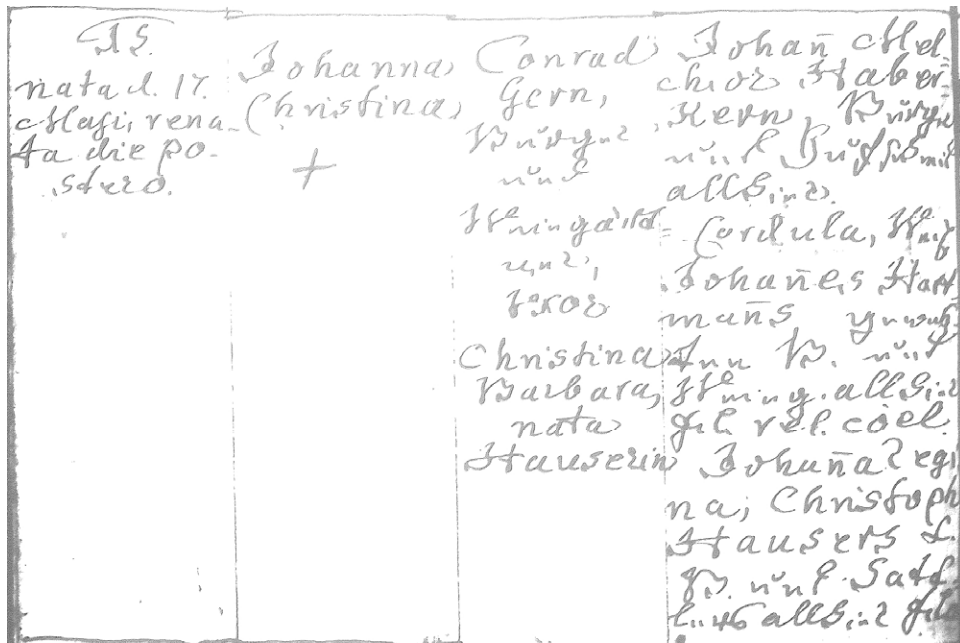
# Johanna Christina Gern or Johanna Christiana Garnes did not die in Germany

Lynn E. Garn, Ph.D.  
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This report provides evidence that Johanna Christina Gern did not die in Germany as we previously claimed and that she immigrated with her parents to America where she was known as Johanna Christiana Garnes or Hannah Garnes by her descendants.

In our book, *The Garn Family including Carn, Garnes, Garns and Gern*, we reported that Conrad Gern and his wife Christina Barbara had a daughter Johanna Christina Gern, who was born on 17 May 1784 in Kürnbach, Germany.<sup>[1]</sup> We also reported that she died there soon after she was born.

Our incorrect conclusions about her death were based on her birth and christening record, immigration records of her parents and on German naming conventions. The image below shows Johanna Christina's birth and christening record.<sup>[2]</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Lynn E. Garn, *The Garn Family including Carn, Garnes, Garns and Gern*, (Woodbridge, VA, 2011), p. 58, person #23.

<sup>2</sup> Kürnbach, Germany, Church Records, Baptisms, 1758-1790, FHL #1192099.

The column on the left gives the day and month of her birth and christening. It reports that she was born on 17 May and that she was christened the next day. This record appears in the section of records for 1784. Therefore she was born on 17 May 1784.

The cross or + below her name in the next column indicates that she died. No date of death was recorded with the cross. Some of the others with crosses under their names in the records had death dates recorded. But many did not have death dates recorded. So it was not unusual that no death date was recorded for Johanna Christina.

Johanna Christina's parents immigrated to America in 1785, when Johanna Christina would have been 17 months old.<sup>[3]</sup> No Johanna Christina was listed among the children of Conrad and Barbara Gern in the immigration record. We presumed their last child listed, Hannah, was a different child than Johanna Christina because she should have been called by her middle name under German naming conventions. And the cross below Johanna Christina's name in the birth and christening record indicated that she had died. As a result, we concluded that Johanna Christina died in Germany and that another child, Hannah, was born after the family left Kürnbach and before they arrived in America.

After our Garn Family book was published and the family tree was placed on Ancestry.com, we were contacted by Marilyn Peters of Fort Collins, Colorado. She asked us how certain we were that Johanna Christina Gern had died in Germany. She said that she believed Johanna Christina may not have died in Germany and pointed out the grave marker of Johanna Christiana *Garnes* Mills on FindAGrave.com.<sup>[4]</sup> That grave marker is located in the Primitive Baptist Church Cemetery in Reynoldsburg, near Jefferson Twp., Franklin Co., Ohio. Information with the image of the grave marker indicated that her surname was Garnes. An image of the grave marker appears on the following page.

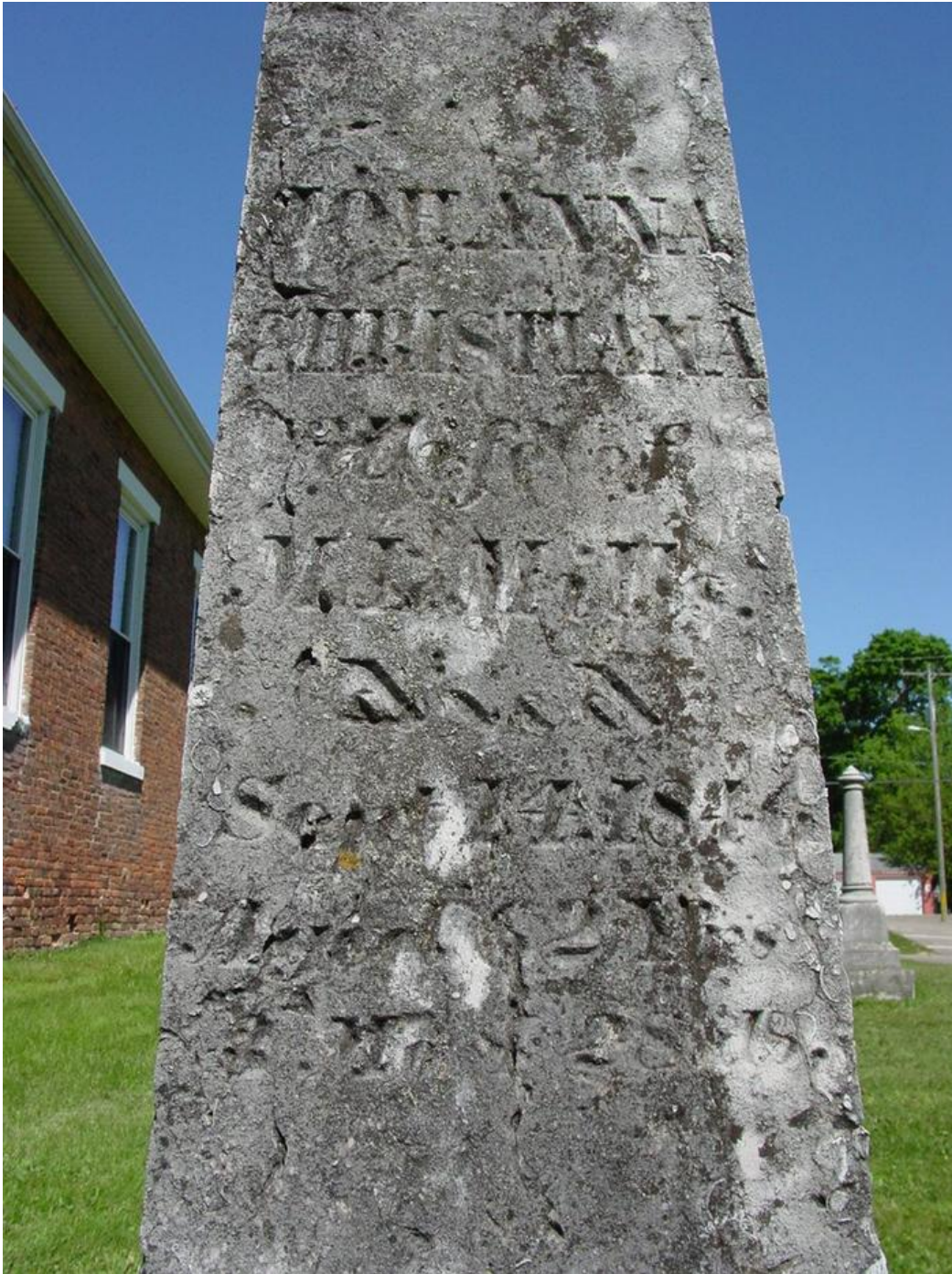
The inscription on the grave marker reports that she died on 14 September 1846 and that she was the wife of M. L. Mills. The inscription also reports that she was 62 years, 3 months, and 28 days old when she died. This age-at-death places Johanna Christina's or Johanna Christiana's birth on 17 May 1784, exactly the date that Johanna Christina Gern was born in Kürnbach. Unfortunately the information about the grave marker did not include evidence for claiming Johanna Christiana's surname was Garnes. And Marilyn Peters did not have that information.

The record by itself appears to be sufficient to claim the two were the same person since the surname, Garnes, appearing with the image of the grave marker is one that has been used interchangeably with Gern at times. Anyone who was already aware of the birth of a Johanna Christina Gern in Kürnbach would likely have used the Gern surname and included the names of her parents when recording the information for the grave marker. Therefore we believed the people who recorded her surname with the grave marker information based her surname on a different record than the Kürnbach church records.

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<sup>3</sup> Ralph Beaver Strassburger, *Pennsylvania German Pioneers, A Publication of the Original Lists of Arrivals in the Port of Philadelphia from 1727 to 1808*, Volume III, 1785-1808, (Norristown, Pennsylvania, 1934), List 333, pp. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> <[www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com)>, Memorial #32518264.



Even though we were convinced that Johanna's surname, Garnes, in the FindAGrave record came from a different record than the Kürnberg church records, we wanted confirmation of the surname. Upon contacting Mari Gaydos Smith of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, who maintains the grave marker information for the grave of Johanna Christiana *Garnes* Mills on FindAGrave.com, we were informed of the biographical

information for Eccles Nay, whose wife, Elizabeth Mills, was reported to be the daughter of Michael and Hannah (Garnes) Mills.<sup>[5]</sup> The full biography of Eccles Nay follows:

*ECCLES NAY was born in Bristol, Vermont, September 11, 1807. He is a son of Jeremiah and Mary (Dunshe) Nay, of New Hampshire. He was married in Franklin, Jefferson County, Ohio [sic, clearly Jefferson Twp., Franklin Co., Ohio], January 8, 1831 to Elizabeth Mills, born in Sussex County, New Jersey, March 5, 1812. Her parents were Michael and Hannah (Garnes) Mills, the former born in New York, in 1782, the latter in Germany in 1782 [sic]. Mr. Nay settled in Fulton County in 1834. After paying for his land, he had no money left. The other settlers in the township were: David Williams, William Meeker, and Sidney Hawley. They had to go with ox teams to Maumee for provisions, a journey of three days. Wolves were abundant, and the early settlers used to build fires to scare them away from their cabins at night. Mr. Nay was at 27 log house raisings the first summer. James Nay, grandfather of Eccles Nay, was one of the "Tea Party" at Boston and carried away some of the tea in his shoes which was in the possession of his friends at his death. He was also in the Revolutionary war and took part in the battle of Bunker Hill. [His] Post-office, Delta. [His] Business, farmer, [in] section 9.*

The record clearly reports that Hannah's or Johanna Christiana's surname was Garnes. The chances of two Johanna Christina or Christianas being born the same day in Germany are slim. The chances of two different Johanna Christina or Christianas being born the same day and also sharing the names Gern and Garnes, which were used interchangeably by others at the time of her death, are improbably small.

Therefore we are now convinced that Johanna Christina Gern did not die in Germany, that she immigrated to America with her parents in 1785, and that she was known as Johanna Christiana Garnes or Hannah Garnes by her family/descendants in America. The only logical explanation is that:

1. Johanna Christina's family disregarded German naming conventions and called her Hannah instead of Christina as she would have been called according to German naming conventions in use at the time of her birth.
2. Johanna Christiana was the Hannah who immigrated with her parents in 1785, which means that there never was a Hannah, who appeared as person #24 in our book. Johanna Christina, #23 in our book, and Hannah, #24 in our book, were the same person.
3. Our explanation of the cross or + below Johanna Christina's name in the Kürnbach church records is that German immigrants in America corresponded with people in the fatherland. Someone in America undoubtedly reported Johanna Christina's death, possibly well afterward, to a resident of Kürnbach, who passed the news to the church officials, who in turn recorded the cross below her birth and christening record. Absence of a death date with the cross likely means the news of Johanna Christina's death did not include the actual date of her death.

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<sup>5</sup> *Historical Atlas of the World Illustrated, Fulton County, Ohio*, H. H. Hardesty & Co., Publishers, (Chicago, 1875), p. 9, found at <<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohfulton/AtlasBioPg9.html>>, accessed 28 July 2012; index to the preceding may be found at <<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ohfulton/AtlasBioINDEX.html>>.