



House with a Stone Wall
Revised, 2018
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**House with a Stone Wall
Spring Valley Road,
Fallville, Virginia about 1940**

Sometimes known as the “Garlie Burris House,” the residence was formerly called the “Byrd House” during most of its existence. It has a long history going back at least a hundred years or more. These days the house is on occasion used by locals as a marker in giving directions.

The Garlie Burris house has been a part of my life since the late 1940’s when my family used to visit my grandparents, Jonce and Lena Byrd Vaughan Burris, who lived in the cabin some distance behind. Garlie was not only a neighbor, but kin, being the son of Charles and Oma Burris. Charles was grandfather Jonce’s brother which would make him my great uncle.



Gary, Ron, Sam and Eldon Burris



Cabin smoke from the chimney means coffee is on in the fireplace.



Mountain Style

The structure of the dwelling makes it what is termed a “true” mountain style Appalachian farm house. This kind of framed home was popular during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. With little time or money for fancy ornament, these houses were simple and practical. Often the trees that were cleared to make way for the homes were cut into timber to build them. Originally the homes were roofed using hand split oak shingles from a locally cut tree. Metal roofs were often installed right over the oak in the middle 1900’s. Even the interior wall surfaces were wood. Frame homes did a better job of keeping the winter wind out, were built small to save costs and provide shelter. While long, narrow porches provided extra living space, they also provided comfort for the summer heat in warm weather and added a bit of protection from cold in the winter months.

History: Progress comes to the Appalachia.

The 1930’s and 1940’s saw the automobile begin to completely change mountain life. In the first half of the twentieth century, roads spread like forest fires, but were more difficult and costly to build in the mountains. As a result, the mountain culture remained old fashioned but also more intact. In the early days, what are roads today were just tracks or paths with soil and rocks. Members of the community helped keep up the road themselves. Gradually, concrete paving was laid. My father Cliff Burris worked briefly on the crew that helped pave the dirt strips that became Spring Valley Road. I remember him telling me how he felt about running a jack hammer during the construction! It is now two lane State Highway 805.

First floor rooms in the house

Fireplaces were often installed in the dining rooms, cooking areas, living rooms and sometimes bedrooms. There were chairs for sitting in these rooms and were often where the residents relaxed in the evenings. The siding of the houses were made of locally harvested hard wood sawed in a nearby mill. Blacksmiths made iron nails by hand to construct the homes and often nails, hinges and windows were the only items purchased during construction.



Bathroom



Dining room



Dining room fire place



Living room



The porch serves as the rear entrance to the house.



Kitchen



Sitting room

There are two entrances to the Garlie Burris house. When entering the front of the house facing the road, use the front porch. You will go into a small hall with a stairway. When entering the back porch, the kitchen is first. Both the back porch itself and kitchen were later additions to the structure.

The interior rooms of the house include, on the ground floor, the bathroom, kitchen, sitting room, dining room and living room. The stairs at the front entrance lead us to three bedrooms and one master bedroom upstairs.

At the top of the stairs, one turns left to see the first small bedroom. Keep going down the hallway and straight ahead is the master bedroom which is the corner room facing the road. Exiting the main bedroom to the hall, turn left again where there is a hallway to the back of the house. You will pass a few places for personal storage and then come to the two back bedrooms.

Here there is one bedroom on the left and another on the right. The house has three beautiful fire places, two downstairs and one upstairs in the master bedroom. The fireplaces are all bricked separately but join at the roof line into one chimney.



Master bedroom with fireplace



Front hallway



Back and hallway



Angie and Gary Burriss

The Byrd House

From the time it was built and for many years after, the dwelling was called the “ Byrd house”. The builder of the house was most possibly would have been who folks recall to the earliest resident. Alex Byrd was born in 1847 and died in 1915. It turns out that he may have been a second cousin to my Great, Great, Grandfather John Patton Byrd. His wife, Mary Jane Vaught Byrd was born in 1843 and died in 1925. They had one son, James Leon, Born in 1870. He died in 1929. The family is buried in Jerusalem Methodist Church Cemetery, not far away.



Byrd House as seen from Jerusalem Road

Mary Jane lived in the house alone after her husband's death until she passed away. Grace Burris Atkins, who lived as a child with her parents, Jonce and Lena, in the Burris cabin just behind, told her daughter Sue that sometimes Mrs. Byrd would get frightened, being alone. She would then use the back path to walk over and stay with the Jonce Burris family. Mary Jane would come out of the house on these occasions and walk in her long black skirt, carrying her chamber pot. Mrs. Byrd sometimes told the kids that, "Old Nebo will get you", and they would get scared! Old Nebo is actually the name of a ridge in Jordan during Biblical times.



View of the living room with fire place

The next family to occupy the house was Harley and Ruth Phillips who had moved in to live with Mrs. Byrd sometime before her death. Because they were in the house at her passing, the couple continued to dwell there, probably without paying rent, which was not at all uncommon in those days. Harley and Ruth lived with their family in the house for a period of ten years or so according to Mary Phillips Dotson. Their twins Arnold "Bub" Phillips and Alma Ruth Phillips were born there until later marrying Richard Vaught.

Following the Phillips was the Crigger family. Father Will Crigger was unemployed much of the time that he resided there, but his wife Rose worked at the cotton mill in Fries. The couple had six children. Mary recalled their names were Boyd, Edith, Frank, Edward, Munsey and Fred. Mary Dotson said she played with the children as a youngster. Her parents, Harley and Ruth Phillips were living across the road. The Crigger's purchased the house from James Leon Byrd, the son.

While the Crigger family lived there, they built a fence between their property and the property of Jonce and Lena Burris to the rear. This meant that the Burris family was cut off from direct access to Spring Valley Road after the fence was installed. Jonce Burris, my grandfather, did not contest the action, but instead made a path down to the lower road called Creek Lane. The family was then able to walk up Creek Lane to Spring Valley Road. Mr. Jonce, as the neighbors called him, would also cross into Steve Rhudy's field, after crossing the creek, to where he kept his

cows for milking. At that time, Jonce was hand carrying water for his animals from Creek Road. Soon after, the Crigger's sold the house and land to the Rush Fielder family.

The Fielders were original settlers in the area through a Revolutionary War land grant and had their home place down Spring Valley around the curve. One of the first things Mr. Rush did was to take down the fence the Chiggers' had put up, allowing Mr. Jonce to again have direct access to Spring Valley Road . All of this occurred during the 1930's. Mr. Rush also helped the Burris family with their water system by piping water from the Fielder's well to the barn, located above he cabin, where Jonce had his cows. Thus Jonce no longer had to hand carry those buckets of water. After the Fielders purchased the house, there were a number of people who resided there through the early 1940's.

Bayne and Helen Fielder and their son Dennis, as well as Bayne's brother John and his wife Dell with their daughter Katherine lived there by turns with Rush and Maggie Shupe Fielder. Jen Shupe, sister of Maggie, passed away in the house. When she died, a wake was held and her body was placed in the living room overnight. Mary Dotson recalled when she was just a young girl, going to view the body .

Sam Atkins, later the husband of Grace Burris, stayed in the house before leaving for military service during World War II. Later on he told his wife, Grace, that when he slept upstairs, "it was the coldest house he had ever slept in!" He also said he heard ghostly sounds in the upstairs hall during the night.

From the Byrd House to the Garlie Burris House

It was sometime during the mid 1940's that Garlie and Mildred Sims Burris (she was from Comer's Rock, a town nearby) moved from Independence to the Byrd house. The couple had four children. They were Brenda, Gary, Lake and Gordon. The house was actually purchased by Mildred's brother Cliff Sims, for the couple. Garlie was the son of Charles Burris and worked for the Higgins Oil Company, most of the time as a painter. Higgins furnished a truck for him and he would spend the Spring, Summer and Fall months painting various buildings for Higgins in the larger community. In later years, Garlie worked on Iron Mountain manning a fire tower during the summer months. The tower, since torn down, was part of the fire prevention program at the time. Garlie talked about how he loved his experiences up on that mountain.

The Garlie Burris family moved out of the house in the late 1970's mainly due to an accident. Garlie was climbing an apple tree below the house when he fell and broke his leg. He never really recovered , so decided he would move back to the town of Independence so that relatives could help take care of him there.

Some time after, the house was sold to the Haynes family from Charlotte, North Carolina. Mr. Haynes parents often came from Florida to stay in the house during the summer months. Eventually the house was purchased by Portia Crigger.



**Garlie and Mildred Burris near the stone wall.
His initials are on the wall to the right.**

The old well house and shed

Also on the property is the old well house, a small building used for water pipe access. It is located in the back of the house and up the hill a bit. Such small structures were usually called spring houses. Commonly found in rural area before the advent of the refrigerator and electricity, they were the most efficient way to cool items.

A garage and storage shed are located below the house near the road.



Old well house



Old shed



L.-R: Patti Burris, Virginia and Warren Holtgrew, Bill Burris and Sam Burris, 2006.



L-R: Sam Burris, Bill Burris and Eldon Burris on the lawn of the Garlie Burris house, 2006.

Sleeping in the Garlie Burris house.

It was my pleasure in the fall of 2011 and the Spring of 2012, to stay in the Garlie Burris house for a total of about three weeks. The house is presently owned by my brother, Ron Burris, who purchased it from Portia Crigger in 2006.

During those short Fall and Spring stays, I used wood as a source of heat. The house does have older electric panel heat along the floor boards in some rooms. There are also vents in the ceiling downstairs so if a fire is burning in the kitchen stove, the heat will pass up stairs to the bedrooms. There is also an electric stove, including oven, hot and cold running water .

While staying there, I used the upstairs bedroom on the right side in the back for sleeping. That was where Gary Burris slept when the Garlie Burris family lived there. I slept very well every night as there were plenty of covers to ward off any chill. I will admit that the house may be a bit “noisy” at times during the night. That is because with the types of wood used along with the tin above, result in movements due to the changing of temperatures. Thus at night, the house may, “groan and creak” a bit. This may account for past residents claiming that they, “heard ghosts”. I was very comfortable during my stay there, so if there were any ghosts, they must have been quiet and friendly!



Left bedroom



Right bedroom



Main staircase



Ron Burris with dog Tilley enjoy the fireplace.



The house and Briar Patch Mountain