



**View From Briar Patch: A Burris Family
of Grayson County**

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**VIEW OF JERUSALEM CEMETERY FROM BRIAR PATCH
MOUNTAIN.**

A Burris Family of Grayson County, Virginia

Cover: A group visits the Briar Patch home site of William and Phoebe Burris in the early 1920's. Those in the photo include Bessie Fielder in the front, young Viola Jackson in the center, Ross Burris on the right and Cliff Burris standing at the top.

Burris Family History in Grayson County, Virginia

To get a feeling of connecting with Burris kin from long ago, there is no better way than to climb Briar Patch Mountain located at around 3,000 feet elevation in Southwest Virginia. On top of Briar Patch Mountain is an area called Chestnut Flats where one can find the Poole-Burris Cemetery. The cemetery itself may seem in disarray but it is here that some of the oldest graves of our Burris family in Virginia can be found. Of the 18 graves in the cemetery, eleven are Burris family. Ten stones can be seen, but only one is readable; that of Thomas Burris who was born in 1829, dying in 1909. Other Burris family graves, such as that of Tom's wife, Lottie Charlotte Poole Burris are found down the Mountain at the Jerusalem Cemetery. There are a few more graves of family members at the Mount Campbell Cemetery.

So how and why did these ancestors come to live in the Fallville area along Spring Valley Road back in the 1800s?

According to "The Heritage of Surry County North Carolina, Volume I - 1983", published by the Surry County Genealogical Association, Thomas Burrus came south from Virginia to Haystack, Surry County, North Carolina.



**William and Thomas Burrus
in the early 1850's.**



**Phoebe Jane Burrus,
wife of William.**



**The Burreis brothers, minus Will. L-R:
John, Lum, Jonce, Charles and Martin
on the Briar Patch homestead.**

Thomas Burrus met and married Nancy Tucker. The couple went to the Siloam area and from there to Rockford, North Carolina where they bought land just west of where the Rockford Baptist Church now stands. Here they raised four sons and named them John, Lee Hammond, Miley and George Thomas. One of the four sons, George Thomas Burrus, born in 1790, married Mariah Pell, born the same year. George and Mariah had four children. They were George Thomas Jr., Jestina, Thomas and William.

William and his brother Tom grew up in Rockford and eventually traveled north to settle in what is now the Fallville region of Southwest Virginia. Here they established a home on Briar Patch Mountain just below Chestnut Flats. We are not sure when this move was made. Also at this time, William and his brother George T. Burris, along with George's Wife, Allie Cave might have agreed that their daughter, William's own niece Phoebe, would be William's wife.

Another curiosity of the time was the change in the spelling of last names. The family members who remained in Grayson County and made their homes there, ended up with the "us" of the "Burrus" name changed to "is" making it "Burris." We cannot be sure, but most likely the census takers of the day heard the pronunciation of "Burrus" and wrote it down as "Burris." Until this day, the families in the areas of North Carolina still use "Burrus" while those in Grayson have been using "Burris" for more than a century now! It is likely that there was movement back and forth across the state line for several years between members of the Burris/Burrus families since there was kin both in Virginia and North Carolina. Finally, it is important to note that the two members of the Burris family in Grayson County, Virginia, Tom Burris and William Burris, stayed and established their homes in the Fallville community and raised their children there. The men died and were buried in Grayson, as were their wives and most of their children.



Photo taken around 1900. Front row: William Burriss, Phoebe Jane Burriss and Tom Burriss. Back row: Jonce Weldon Burriss, Lena Tabitha Byrd Vaughan Burriss, Missouri Martin Burriss. George Martin Burriss, Johnny Guy Burriss, William Thomas Burriss holding a child. Charles Mitchell and Norma Naomi Oma Katherine (Phoebe) Callahan Burriss. (Missing from the photo are Tom's wife Lottie Charlotte Poole Burriss, Columbus (Lum) Thornton Burriss and Flora Roberts Burriss).



**Back row: Charles Mitchell, William Thomas (W. T.), Johnny Guy.
Frt. Row: Columbus Thornton (Lum), George Martin, Jonathan Weldon
(Jonce) Burris.**

This photo of the Burris brothers was taken about 1914,
possibly
on one of Will's trips back from Nebraska. As my father had
done later in 1930, Will had left Virginia in 1900 with some
of
his friends to seek employment in the Midwest and ended up
farming. My father Cliff and our family traveled from northeast
Nebraska to southwest Virginia whenever we could to see our
kin just as Will had done. Somehow, even though we lived far
away in Nebraska,
our extended family stayed close. If we did not have the
opportunity to visit each other, we telephoned and wrote
letters. Even today, I feel that my cousins are just like
brothers and sisters to me. I knew and remembered most
of the men in this photo. Of course, I knew Grandpa
Jonce the best because we always stayed at Grandpa
and Grandma's cabin when we visited. I also
knew Will quite well because he migrated to
Nebraska earlier as a young man and became a farmer
there just as my father Cliff would do later. My Dad
stayed with Will Burris while he worked as a
farmhand during the Great Depression.

Fallville
School
about
1895





1st row: Alfred Vaughn, Jim Fielder, Cleve Rhudy, Silas Pinion, Lester Rhudy. 2nd row: Lizzie Rhudy Carter , Lillie Fielder (Daniel), Ada Phillips (Frank), Alpha Byrd (Pinion), Bessie Burris, Sallis Hall (Black), Grace Byrd (Poole), Bertha Pinion (Wood), Mack Vaughn (Boone), Susan Fielder (Fielder), Blanch Rhudy (Ward), Cynthia Rhudy. 3rd Row: Ella Vaughn, (Lillian Fielder (Porter), Bill Rhudy, Pyatt Rhudy (Kizzie) , Johnny Burris, lizzie Fielder (Thomas), Bessie Rhudy (Vaughn) Leona Fielder (Vaughn). 4th row: Will Phillips, Willie Byrd, John W. Rhudy, Emmett Vaught-teacher, Johnson (Jonathan) W. Burris. 5th Row: George C. Vaughn-carpenter, Lewis F. Burris, Tommy Fielder, George F. Fielder, Will Burris, Lovic Byrd, James Adams, Steve Rhudy, Ruth Pinion Vaughn, Orville C. Vaught, Mardie Rudy (Porter).



Jonce and Lena's Cabin about 1960.



**Lena Byrd Vaughn Burris,
Jonce, Sam, Cliff Burris and
Mittie Dell Bourne Jackson.**



**Ed Evans, holding son Eddie,
Lena Burris, Elizabeth Burris Evens,
Jonce and Bayse Burris.**



The Burris Family about 1900
L-R front row: George Martin Burris, Missouri Burris
holding a child, Jonce Burris, Lena Burris.
2nd row: William Burris, Phoebe Burris and Tom Burris.
3rd row: Will Burris, John Burris, Charles Burris and Oma.



Will Burris surrounded by friends, about 1900.



**John and Eura Burris
about 1940.**



**Bayse Burris and Bessie Fielder,
daughter of Rush Fielder.
The Burris and Fielder families
were neighbors.**



**L-R: Ross Burris with
mother Lena and possibly
Raymond Bourne.**



**Garlie Burris, Son of
Charles, about 1920.**



**Young people, in their Sunday best,
climbing Briar Patch about 1900.**

**Chestnut
Flats taken
from
Jerusalem
United
Methodist
Church
Cemetery.**







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