

MY TRIP TO VIRGINIA



BY: LILLIAN VERITA BURRIS JONES

WITH COMMENTS BY SAM BURRIS

Lillian Burris
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In August of the year nineteen-fourteen, I had a trip that was very interesting to me. I accompanied my father to his boyhood home in Virginia. During the two weeks spent on this trip I saw many things I will always remember. We took the trip at that time because of the serious illness of my grandmother. She had been ill for some time, and one day we received a telegram saying we must come soon if we wished to see her as she was much worse. Papa decided to go the following day and take me with him. We saw many new things and had several odd experiences during the journey.

We started the afternoon of August twenty second, nineteen twenty-eighths. It was a rather new experience to leave my mother behind when going anywhere, except to town. However, this did not bother me long. I was interested in watching the fields as they seemed to whirl by.

When we arrived in Fremont, Nebraska, a number of Indians boarded the train. They were in civilian clothes, and this shocked me very much. However, papa said they were Indians and I changed my idea of them when we were just a few miles from home. At Omaha we went into the large depot where papa got the tickets checked for the entire trip. We ate our suppers that mama had packed for us. How good it tasted to me. When the train that we were going to take was made up, we got on.

We were soon viewing Iowa fields and towns. Darkness came while going through Iowa and the lamps were lighted. That was very amusing to me. When bed time came, papa reversed the seat next to ours, folded my sweater for a pillow and told me to lie down. He then covered me with a coat. This is the kind of bed I used during the entire trip. By daylight we passed Chicago. We rode some distance east on the road to Columbus, Ohio. The country here looked quite different from home.

When we left Columbus and started to cross West Virginia, the scene changed. The country was much different and was so rough! Then we went through a tunnel and the lights had been lit, but papa said nothing.

Suddenly it grew dark! I did not know what to think. We were out in a few minutes when Papa told me to look back. I could see the mouth of a tunnel. The end cars were just coming out. This made an odd impression on me. Later we went through "Mile" tunnel as well as several small ones. We were soon going through the coal mining districts of West Virginia. Many people were sick here from the fumes that arose from the mines. Seeing mountain peaks far and near were common by this time. We were into Virginia and nearing the place at where we were to change trains. When we reached the station, they did not call the number we were waiting for. We became very anxious. Finally, they called "Roanoke"! We had gone too far! When the conductor came in, papa showed him our ticket and asked about the station. The man explained that the station name had changed. This had been a year or so before, but papa had not been over the road since the change, nor was it listed on the ticket. After some argument, and a threat to report the conductor to head officers, he gave us our pass back. We then had a four hour wait, and every minute was precious. For a short time, the negro workers and the antics of the negro children amused me but the time grew very long.

Finally, our train came and we took the forty-mile ride back to the proper point. Here we caught the right train but we had lost a half days' time. By evening we had reached the end of the line and were about twenty miles from our last station. We could not make connection here so it was necessary to spend the night at a hotel. The hotels there differ from our hotels in one respect. They have very comfortable beds. The one we slept on was made of feather ticks. It seemed I had just fallen asleep when papa pulled me out and said we must hurry if we wanted to eat breakfast. He ate his, but I was too slow. The bus came before I had time to finish my food. I enjoyed the half hour ride that took us to the town, marking the end of our train ride.

The second part of the trip, held more surprises and novelties than any other period of my life. First there was no one to meet us. After calling an old neighbor and friend who had promised to get us, we started walking. I was wearing white shoes. Imagine how I felt when I noticed they were getting red instead of black. That was caused by red clay with sand. It was warm and I soon became very thirsty.

Papa walked to the side of the road where there was a small slope. He cleared some leaves away. In just a few minutes he had cleaned out a spring. He made me a cup out of some large leaves. I believe that water was the clearest and coldest I had ever drunk! We walked on until we saw apples lying in the road. It seemed a shame to see so much good fruit going to waste. I did all I could, but soon found it had no effect. There seemed to be more instead of less. I had come to this conclusion when we saw a team of horses coming to meet us. We waited in the shade of a large tree. When the usual greetings were over, we got in the carriage and were off again!

On the road, papa showed me the Methodist church he had attended, the place where grandpas grave was, the stream in which grandma had been baptized besides along with the homes of many people whom he knew. When we reached my uncle's home, we found grandma feeling better. And here we met many of my cousins, uncles and aunts as well as some of the neighbors.

Papa had told me that he thought my aunt Oma would comb my hair for me if I asked her to. As soon as I gained enough courage, I did. She said she would. It was an awful job. My hair was so thick and long that it was very tangled. When this ordeal was finished, my cousin started showing me things. For over a week this continued. Some of the things I saw were chestnuts, chinquapins, grape vine swings and spring houses. There were rocks of all descriptions, fire places, rail fences and peaches that were beginning to ripen! For once, I had enough to eat and some leftover. I had the experience of sores caused by the changing climate. This bothered me very much but did not ruin my good time. This lasted until my grandmother was out of danger. Papa was needed at home, so we prepared to leave with him.

With a few exceptions, our journey toward home was about the same as the one going away. All of this was very beautiful but we were having to start for home. In West Virginia, we passed the "coke ovens" region at night. I was very anxious to finish the trip. It had been very interesting and pleasant, but I think the sight of my mother, sister and little brother was the most welcoming sight of the entire journey.

Neighbors with Lillian, Virgie, Harlan and Gyda



Lillian some years after the trip



Lillian Burriss Jones as a teacher



Uncle Will Burriss in later years

Thanks to my cousins Megan Jones, Neva, and her husband Don.

THOUGHTS FROM THE AUTHOR:

Lillian Verita Burris Jones was first cousin to my father Samuel Clifton Burris or 'Cliff'. She was the daughter of Will and Winnie Burris and was born on a farm in northeast Nebraska. She and her husband Don were educators all their adult lives. They

where active in teacher unions and traveled extensively. Lillian and her siblings grew up with great respect for the mountains of Virginia and the family traveled there as often as they could. This short diary is an example of the closeness found by, not only her parents, but by her siblings.

As a child, I remember when the time came for the Jones family to visit Nebraska. We would all go to see the slides shows or movies of their travels. We kids would also ramp around and enjoy the gatherings, including the food! As a result of their visits, there were many of us in our families who chose teaching as a profession, including myself. one can bet that when the Burris clan got together, the topic was always about Virginia and the mountains around.

August 14, 2000:

Below is a photo of the editor at age 77. Birthday cake was from wife Emmi.

