

The Lawthers' Homestead

Courtesy of Jefferson Twp. Historical Society

THE LAWTHERS' HOMESTEAD

as told by Dorothy McFarland Muzopappa
on March 17, 2007 at the meeting of
The Jefferson Township Historical Society

Alexander Lawthers, the 3rd, parents, James and Jeannette Shaw Lawthers, were married in County Artim Ireland in 1790 and set sail for America on their wedding day. Jeannette was 17 at the time and never saw her parents or family again. His grandfather Alexander Lawthers, the 1st, was by marriage to a member of the Murchland clan, one of many Murchlands who came on the same ship with his parents. His parents lived for a few years in Brook County, Virginia, on a farm of his Great Uncle Robert Murchland. His oldest sister June was born in Wells Fort 1791 during an Indian raid.

Alexander Lawthers, the 3rd, was born July 23, 1808 on the farm of his Great Uncle Robert Murchland. He was the Alexander that built our house. His grandfather bought a farm in what is now Jefferson Township and built a log cabin where he and some of his children lived out their lives. After the death of his grandparents, his father, Alexander, the 2nd, moved to the log cabin with his unmarried siblings. By 1810 there was 13 in this tiny house. Alexander, the 3rd, was two years old at the time.

December 1820 his father, Alexander, the 2nd, died, age 51, leaving his mother with five children still at home. His baby brother, age 6, his 11year old sister, Catherine, who was mentally retarded and young Alexander, the 3rd. Alexander, the 3rd, married Nancy Smith, 1844. Built the house. By 1850 Nancy and Alexander had 3 children living in the new dwelling with his mother and younger brother. His two unmarried sisters continued to live in the cabin.

By 1860 his mother passed away and his youngest brother left home. In 1870 he moved June and Catherine into the big house. No one lived in the cabin again. In 1863 a disease passed through the county from which his son, little Alexander, the 4th, died. In 1870 his daughter Mary Jane died age 22. By 1877 both of his sisters were gone. In 1877 Alexander, the 3rd, passed away also. John and daughter Nancy soon married leaving Robert at home with his mother Nancy. In 1893 Nancy died and the old Lawthers' homestead became a ghost house for 20 years.

A man named Joseph Burris, and his wife Sabina Clemens Burris, who was from Independence, moved into the empty house. They were our grandparents. They were married 1888. He was a sharecropper. Four children were born to this marriage; Anna, Martha, Laura and Mary. Mary was the youngest – born May 4, 1902. She was our mother. When she was about two, they moved to a house on what is now Strobe Road. Our grandparents moved several times as he had to walk to whatever farm he was employed on. This house burned and they only saved her wedding clock and a dish. Neighbors gathered up what they could and they moved into the White Church. Looking around at the floor space here, it boggles my mind as there were other folks living here. Grandma said some nights not much sleep as the fellow played the fiddle at night.



Joseph Burris and his wife
Sabina Clemens Burris
(Our grandparents)



Mary Burris McFarland and
her husband James McFarland
(Our parents)

Once they lived in the house where Merle Thorley lived when he passed away. The last place was in Eldersville on the road not far from Shorty Weigmann's farm. They never owned a home. Granddad left sharecropping, and for a short while worked as a Railroad Shop Labor around 1919.

A 17151 Starbuckles 15 1918

United Brotherhood of Maintenance-of-Way Employees and
Railway Shop Laborers
Affiliated with Amer. Fed. of Labor and T. & L. C. of Canada

WORKING CARD

THIS CERTIFIES that Bro. Joseph Burris
is a member of Lodge No. 715 Cert No. Starbuckles

Dues paid in full to April 1st 1919 to 1919

Initiation Fee \$ 3.00 Employed in Track Dept Dept. 1st Sys. RR

Grand Dues \$ 2.00

Sys. Div. Dues \$.50

Local Dues \$.25

TOTAL \$ 5.75

A. E. Barber
Grand President

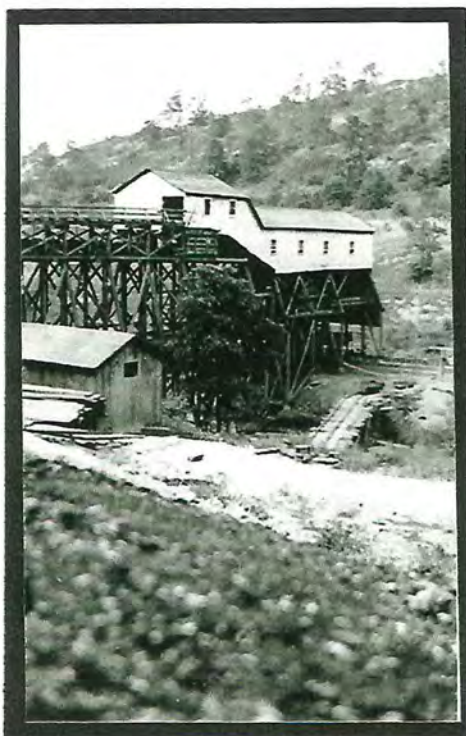
(Authorized Representative)
Geo. Seal
Grand Secretary-Treasurer.

Our Dad, James McFarland, was born November 25, 1892 and lived in McDonald. Dad had only three years of schooling.

His father, Thomas, was ill and so Dad went to work at age 12 in a coal mine. He served in the US Army in World War I.



He worked in the mines again. He came to the Shintown Mine and boarded at Agnes Murchlands, now where our memorial stands. In 1921 he had a Model T Ford and later a team of horses. He did a number of jobs at the mine – motor man, wiring and dug coal.



Shintown Mine Tippel – Eldersville, PA



James McFarland (Dad) Motor man in mine

With three years of schooling, I don't know how he learned to do all of these things at the mine. Dad met mother here in Eldersville. December 12, 1923 they married and bought the Lawthers farm. The house needed a new roof and other repairs. Fixed it up and moved in. Not much in the way of furniture. We girls grew up with this same furniture.



Our house, the old Lawthers' farm

The house had two chimneys at each end – all built inside the walls. Only seen above the roof. There were four rooms – two down – two up. Grates in the two down and one grate upstairs and a large one in the basement. It had irons that wing out. Maybe the Lawthers used it for cooking. Basement was of dirt floor with several flat stones here and there. A dark room with potato bins and shelves where mom stored her canned goods. Kitchen and living room had cupboards that were from ceiling to the floor. Living room cupboard was a little different as it had a small one beside the big one and mom called it the medicine cupboard. Off the kitchen was a porch that Dad screened in. It was in the center with a pantry at one end and a wool room at the far end.

Mr. Lawthers raised sheep. This section of the house was never closed in – just had posts that held it up. Narrow steps came up from the basement into the kitchen. Close by were two long steps, a stair door and one long step inside the stair door and the remaining steps was triangle in shape.

One room upstairs had a clothes closet. Some thing was odd about it as you closed the door and when you came back it would be open. The attic had a small opening near the roof on the outside. Guess it was to circulate air in the attic. The attic was never finished. It too had a mystery – as some nights you could hear something run over the ceiling. We asked Dad what it was and he said, oh it's only a flying squirrel, and we never paid much attention to it. If it was a flying squirrel, it surely must have been an old one.

God must have blessed these 50 acres, as there were five open springs that never went dry. The drinking spring was a little way from the house and it was carved from a stone like the big long stones that was the basement walls. Dip a bucket in and in a few minutes it would be overflowing again. The springhouse was further out, and it was built of fieldstones with a loft. Floor was of flat stones and a L shaped trough that the milk was put in crocks and sat in the

water. Water was cold in summer yet never froze in winter. Over flow went into a watering trough and that over flow went into a lower end of the pigpen.



Mom's beautiful flowers
along the side of the garage



Dad with his dog, Pal

A large lilac bush that was more like a tree was there as well. Up on the hill was the barn. Stalls, hay mow and corn crib. Out on the flat beyond the barn was a large round stone about one yard high – white and gray in color and as smooth as glass. It had a round dip in the top about the depth of a dishpan. When we were small, while dad milked, we sat in it. No one knew what it was used for.

An old, old apple orchard was out from the house. Trees were planted in rows. As old as they were, a few had some branches and they had apples. There was a tree that wasn't as old as the others. It was odd in shape as it was like two trees in one – a trunk that was on top of the ground separated them. It wasn't a root. I called it the twin tree. Up on the hill was a Persimmon tree. Good eating after the frost. Out from the springhouse was a slippery elm. When we got a splinter that Mom couldn't get out, dad would chip off a little bark and mom would soak it in water till it got slippery. Put it on in the morning, when the bandage came off, no splinter and no pain. There were two butter peach trees and two quinces. Mom canned from them. When we were small, an apple tree came up. Sweetest apples I ever ate. Each summer apples on one side and following summer the other side. Shorty Weigmann and Mr. Robertson had orchards, and they said they never tasted apples so sweet. Dad grafted from it yet not so sweet.

There was a large snowball bush that was near where the log cabin was. There was a couple of long stones that must have been from the cabin there as well. Two large catobi trees were in front of the house. We called them tobie trees.

This farm was land locked. Four farms surrounded it: Thorley, Sturges, a small piece of Mikus, and the Charles Southerland. The lane was nearly all on the Thorley farm. It crossed the same creek three times. When it would be flooded we had to climb the hill to bypass.



The Sturges homestead

Mother was trying to paper the rooms downstairs and with the high ceilings, climbing up and down, I arrived one month too soon. That was May 9, 1925, Jean came along November 15, 1926 and Rae, May 27, 1929.



Dorothy and Grandma Burris



1933 Rae, Dorothy and Jean

Mr. Dowden's, a superintendent at the Shintown Mine, home burned. The furnace survived and Dad bought it and put it into our basement and connected to the same chimney that the kitchen stove was in. Was a good drawer so this chimney surely was built well. Dad put in registers and closed the three grates. Divided the two rooms upstairs. Jean and Rae's room now had a half mantel in each. My room was smaller due to the way the stairs came up. I think this was 1927.

In 1945 we got electric and Dad wired the house and springhouse. In 1948 a terrible hail and windstorm came. It tore off parts of the pantry and tore down the two tobie trees.



Our house after the 1948 hail and windstorm

When Dad built the pantry back, he made it into a bathroom, the back porch into a kitchen and the wool room became a wash room with a washer, dryer and a deep freezer. He dug a trench all the way to the springhouse and put in an electric water pump. Now this old house had water in it. What a change this house was having. Even before the electric, we had a radio that was run off of a battery. Dad put up a windmill and run a wire to the battery and it kept it charged. We listened to Kate Smith, Amos and Andy, Lum & Abner, Intersantum and others.



Standing next to the Rose Harbor – Jean, Rae and Dorothy

Dad worked at the Cedar Grove Mine 26 years after the tiple at Shintown Mine was burned. His pays sure were small.

Carnegie Coal Corporation
Henry W. Oliver Building
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Studa, Pa.,
May 4, 1939

Mr. James McFarland,
R. D. #1,
Hanlin Sta., Pa.

Soc. Sec. # 191-01-7349

Dear Sir:

The following is a statement of your wages for the year ending December 31, 1938 at Cedar Grove Mine

First Quarter	-----Jan. 1 to March 31, 1938 -----	\$121.57
Second Quarter	-----Apr. 1 to June 30, 1938-----	5.22
Third Quarter	-----July 1 to Sep't. 30, 1938-----	8.11
Fourth Quarter	-----Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, 1938 -----	51.43

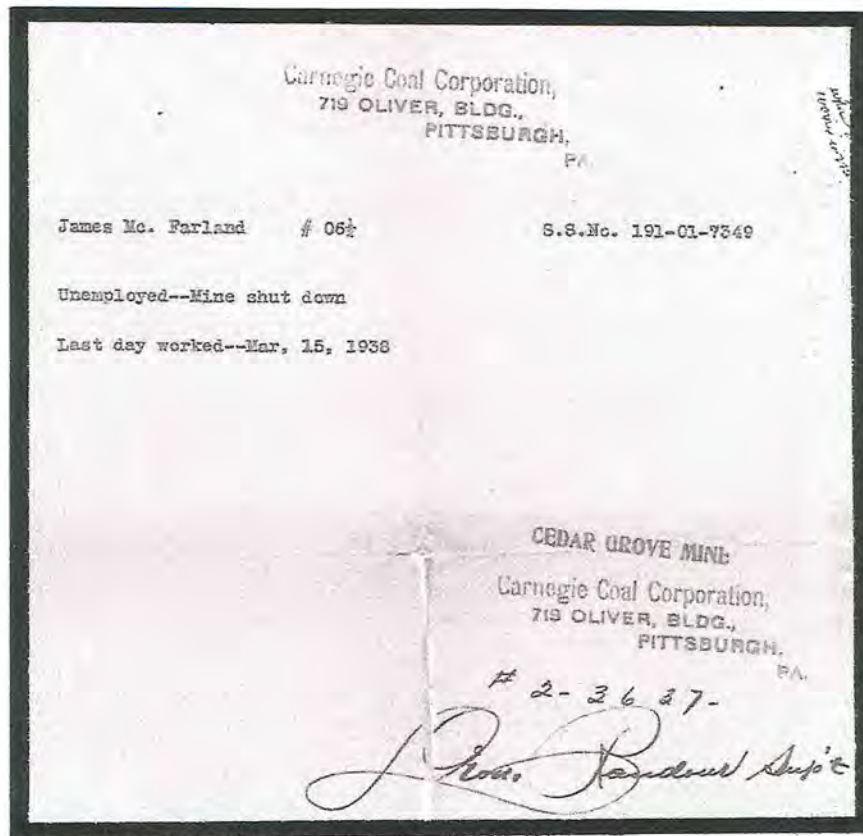
		\$186.33

I hereby certify that the above statemnet is true and correct.

Nellie L. Clark
Pay Roll Clerk
Cedar Grove Mine

In the early part of World War II, we got bottled gas – ran a light and stove from it. Sure made life easier for Mom.

Cedar Grove Mine closed March 15, 1938.



After that he worked at a small plant in Follansbee till the company changed hands and the new company didn't keep any of the older men. He was a tool man there. Our parents gave pounds of butter and honey, gallons of milk and bushels of vegetables to friends – never asking for a dime.

Besides this they always seemed to be taking in people. At times it seemed that this house was like the log cabin when it came to a full house. They had moms, parents till they passed away. Mrs. LaRue, Mrs. Noah, Mr. Bob Stewart, two little boys that their parents were separated and when they got back together and came for the boys, we girls was so sad as they had become the little brothers we never had. Dad's cousin Jim McCalley, Mom's nephew when his mother was ill; her nephew William, Dad's brother John, grandson Jay; a fellow named Henry Taylor, who was working at Saco's Mine till he went to the Army and I think Aunt Martha was the last. She had a stroke and Mom waited on her hand and foot and at times she gave Mom a hard time, not to mention the many relatives and friends who came to visit. Some complained about the old lane yet they came. Guess they liked Mom's cooking and baking.



Jean, Rae, Mrs. Noah, Dorothy



Rae, Dorothy (long hair), William, Jean

Granddad Burriss went to visit his daughters Ann and Martha in Youngstown, Ohio in December 1925. While there, he passed away and is buried at Bethel Cemetery beside the big old pine tree that was planted 1903 for a relative of grandmas from Ohio. No one came for her, so grandma buried her in Bethel. Grandma Burriss passed away February 11, 1932, and she is layed by this old pine and my Tony is there and I, too, will be there some day.

The Coal Company was buying up the farms. Lola Thorley's was sold December 20, 1957. Much later Bologna bought ours. Only one other farm besides ours was ever stripped.

LAW OFFICES
SAMUEL GOLDFARB
 WASHINGTON TRUST BUILDING
 WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA
 BALDWIN 5-4511

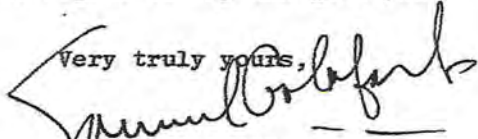
April 3, 1958

Mr. and Mrs. James McFarland
 R. D. 1
 Hanlin Station, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. and Mrs. McFarland:

At your request I checked the records and I have found that Lola Thorley sold her farm on December 20, 1957 to Donald R. Donell, of Weirton, West Virginia. The deed to him specifically recites that the conveyance is under and subject to the right of way given to you by Lola Thorley, by instrument dated May 16, 1955 and recorded in Deed Book 930, page 159.

Your rights at the present time with respect to the new owner are, therefore, the same as they were when Miss Thorley was the owner, and as set forth in the rights of way she gave you and which are recorded.

Very truly yours,

 SAMUEL GOLDFARB

SG/lc

In 1946 I worked at Philips Can Factory in Weirton for 71 cents an hour. I saved my money and by now Saco had a phone line in to old Joe Campbell's house that was their office. If I paid for the telephone poles from the main road to the house we could have a phone. So there went my savings. It was money well spent as we would all be leaving home and in this way they wouldn't be all alone.

A nephew of Mom's ran a dozer and his boss said he could borrow it, and so he made a road. It was much shorter and we only had to now cross the creek one time and that was down by the main road. They went to Samuel Goldfarb attorney, and obtained a deed for the right away, dated May 16, 1955. The coal company let them stay as long as they wanted before stripping would begin. In 1973 they moved down on State Line Road to a mobile that Jean's Frankie was selling. This was good as now we could be closer and help take care of them.

After electric, water, phone and a better road, Mr. Lawthers, would have been proud to know just how far his house had come. Some time later people moved in. Let the roof leak and only put a board over the leak. Not a wise patch. Later Dad asked me to go up to get his electric water pump that he let them have till they got their own. Our hearts sank as we pulled up. Mom's beautiful roses, pennies, big mock orange, forsythias, spice bush, almond and the snowball bush she started from the old one, Iris and others were all about gone. Pigs and cattle ran free and rooted everywhere. Pump was almost gone. The lady said her husband sold it. Smart people as now there was no water in the house. Had to again carry from the spring. Rose harbor was torn down and they never paid Dad for the pump.

They moved and another family moved in. When they left the place was in shambles. In 1980 Mom was ill yet she wanted to go up so we took her. That was a heartbreaking mistake. We were all sick to see what we called home such a disgrace.



Our once beautiful home was in shambles – 1980.

The beautiful glass storm door Dad had hung had a gallon glass jug thrown thru it. The doors were wide open and the cupboard doors left hanging. The fireplaces were torn open and bricks and stones strewn all over. No way would I dare describe the bathroom. The kitchen had a tub of water with rotten cloths in it. Junk, no matter where you looked. Upstairs you could see thru the roof in several places. Jean and Rae's rooms were unbelievable and mine had rotten clothes, toys and who knows what else. I'm sure that old ghost in the attic had left. Not even a ghost could live there.



Mom, great grandson Shawn and Jean sit on the front steps.

Mom and Shawn ventured over to look inside the garage.

The coal company wanted the house gone. This old house, even in its terrible condition, was able to serve mankind once more. The Jefferson Township firemen used it for a fire school on October 18, 1980 at 1:00 p.m. After the fire we went up. The big chimney that we used was still standing. I always thought a chimney was built straight. Well, this one sure wasn't. Maybe that's what made it so good.

The crooked chimney left standing after the fire school burned the house.



I went up once more as Toots Gaudis wanted to see it. She and her mother, Mrs. Kate Welsh, visited us many times. As we were leaving, I saw apples on the twin tree so we picked a few and ate them as we went down the old lane for the last time. Jean and Rae went up after it was stripped and could only go as far as the dirt pile.

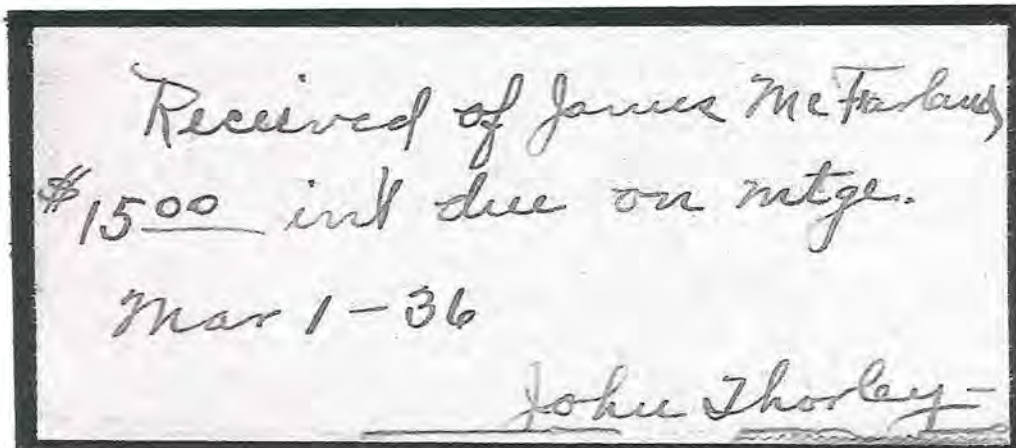
Nature has a way of replenishing. Weeds and underbrush sprang up and now the deer call it their own. I guess there will never be another home on these 50 acres.

Our children were fortunate to spend time with their grandparents in this old house. Shawn, the first great grandson, only saw it when it was in shambles.

Two items and possibly three survive to this day from the original place. Jean wanted the long step stone in front of the porch and Mom, the drinking spring stone. Dan Mozings was cutting trees ahead of the strippers and with high high lift put the step stone in Jean's front yard and the spring stone in my back yard. Mom wanted Frankie to have it yet we couldn't figure how to get it to Weirton. When I was moving to Weirton May 11, 1998, I remembered Mom's wishes. I just couldn't leave it there. So Ted Maslowski, with his big farm tractor that had a forklift on front, moved it to his farm that was the Melvin farm. About five or so years ago, I asked the fellow who cuts my grass if he thought he could get it. So I went up to show him where it was and luck was with us as Ted was home and he put it in the truck bed. When we got to Frankie's, he couldn't get it off as he was afraid of breaking it if he shoved it off. He got help and put it in Frankie's front lawn. He has an old long handle pump in back of it and in summer has water running in it. His neighbor across the way has a big dog and he makes several trips a day to get a drink. Mom would be so glad to know Frank has it.

I guess these two stones and maybe the hanging lamp that was in the kitchen ceiling is what remains. This hanging lamp with its large white shade went to California. When we got the electric, Mom's niece wanted it and Mom gave it to her. She had electric put in it and hung it in her front hall. She sold her house and the man who was buying the house said if you remove the light he wouldn't buy it. So maybe it is still there.

There is nothing else left of the Lawthers' homestead except but a few faded photos. However, the memories of the descendants of the Burriss families remain even to the memory of the old rose harbor. I never knew what they paid or when they finally owned it. The old Lincoln Bank at Avella held the mortgage till it went under and John Thorley took the mortgage over. Found a copy of where Dad paid \$15.00 toward the Mortgage in 1935 and that wasn't the last payment.



Received of James McFarland
\$15.00 int due on mtge.
Mar 1-36
John Thorley

A little known fact. There was an old roadbed that was in the middle of these 50 acres. Started at the State Line Road by Bob Kings and up past the Sturges house, threw the fields and up past our springhouse and barn and on to Charles Southerland's place, down past their big brick house and onto a road that if you went down would bring you to the road that went to Kid's Mill and if you went up the hill past the two story field stone house of John Murchland, it would meet a road that was the Tent Church Road and to the left it passed the Amspokers and beyond. Grandma said she never knew when it was ever used. I think the Indiana passed over it on their way to the Ohio River and beyond. Maybe the pioneer wagons used it on there way west.

Our Dad passed away July 28, 1981 and Mother died April 27, 1991 and they are buried at our Lady of Lourdes Cemetery in Burgettstown. Rae died October 20, 2005. She is buried at St. Mary's Cemetery, Hampson Township. If care had been taken this old house might still have a loving family living in it still. Thanks for listening.