

The McGlone Family House  
by Martha Ann Van Natta

My maternal grandparents, James Fleming (Lark) McGlone and Martha Ellen Burchett McGlone came to the Rainier area in 1911. They were from Carter County, Kentucky; and Lark had heard from friends and relatives already in Rainier that there was work in a lumber mill here. So, they came west on a troop train.

They settled at what was then the end of the road. (Train tracks were in the neighborhood owned by a logging company that was in the area.) Later on, the Columbia River Highway came through and went right on up the hill, splitting their land in two pieces. Lark and Ellie farmed their property, raising pigs, cows, ducks, and at least one horse. (My mother said that when she was a girl, the ducks used to walk behind her wherever she went.) They had two gardens and a huge orchard full of apples, pears and plums. They raised pole beans, bush beans, corn, beets, and various other vegetables, as well as dill weed for making pickles. In their orchard, they had several kinds of apples and pears.

My grandfather, Lark, died in 1944, four years before I was born. Everything I know about him was from things I was told. It is said that he had a beautiful singing voice, and that he was covered with large freckles.

My grandfather built the house in which they lived. There was a large basement underneath where potatoes and canned goods were stored. All of the canned goods were canned by my grandmother. The basement door was always open, and there was a little, brown bat that hung from the rafters at the back of the basement. It was there at least part of every year. There was an old butter churn in the basement with which grandma made butter. There was also a metal milk carrier with glass milk bottles from Standard Dairy.

The porch wrapped halfway around the house. How I loved that porch. Grandma had several black buckets full of agates which she found in the garden when she was hoeing or planting. Most of the agates were yellow or orange carnelian. Grandma tended two gardens until the year she was 91. After that she cut back to one garden. Her gardens were huge, about 60 X 80 feet.

On the back of the porch by the back door was a table with two buckets on it and a dipper. Water was obtained from her well, and then carried to the back porch.

You had to walk on two sides of the house on the porch and across the yard to the well. I loved to look down the well. It was a long way down there, and it looked like a deep, wide stream. To get the water, you took the lid off the well and dropped the bucket down in there. There was a long rope attached to the bucket. The bucket would go sideways when it hit the water and fill up. Then you pulled on the rope which was attached to a pulley. Then you brought it up, dumped the water in the bucket from the porch, hung up the well bucket and closed the well lid. Then you carried the bucket of water to the back porch. That was the best tasting water I ever had. It was very cold. You took the dipper and got yourself a drink with that. You drank directly out of the dipper. Everyone did, and no one thought anything of it, and no one worried about sanitation; and no one ever got sick that we knew of.

Also on the back porch, was a little table with a wash basin in it. There was a soap holder above the basin with soap on it. You washed your hands there because Grandma didn't have any inside plumbing until the 60s.

There was a flight of stairs going down to the garden. You walked between the house and the woodshed. The woodshed was huge with lots of wood stored in it as well as the garden tools. When you continued on to the garden, there was an outhouse on the right. It always scared me to use it because there were spiders in there and bees buzzing around the ceiling. There were screened vents near the top of the walls by the ceiling, and the bugs just made themselves at home.

The house was huge because they had lots of kids. There were seven brothers who survived past infancy and my mother who came last. Everyone was grown and gone by the time I came along except my Uncle Howard who lived there with Grandma.

If you entered through the back door, the kitchen was to the right. There was an old, porcelain cooking stove with which Grandma cooked dinner. She would start up the fire using wood that was in the woodbox right behind the stove. There was an oven in which she made cookies sometimes. These were rectangular cookies with a glaze on them. They tasted like sour cream cookies. She made them with lard. I used to watch her make cookies. She would roll out the dough and cut the cookies in rectangles and put them in a baking pan, then frost them when they came out of the oven. She didn't have a timer. She knew when everything was done. These were the only kind of cookies that Grandma made.

There was a cabinet in which she stored her kettles and pans. I liked this cabinet because it had a door made out of little slats of thin, vertical wood. The door

rolled sideways. I've never seen another like it.

There was a shelf in one corner on which Grandma stored things like cans of lard and her sifter. There was a large work table in the same corner. She had things hanging from the chimney behind the store. For instance, she'd have cobs of corn drying up there. There was a shelf with a hurricane lantern. The lantern was on a stand that you could pull out from the wall on an accordion-like hanger. The lantern was intricate with silver filigree on the base. I remember because my mom and I had to go to Grandma's and get the lantern down for her during the Columbus Day Storm in 1962. One more thing in the kitchen that I remember was the window with a wire fly swatter hanging beside it. You could look out at the garden which was a drop because the main part of the house was above the basement making it seem like you were on the second floor. Mom told me that Grandpa used to shoot opossums out that window. He said it was some of the best eating there was.

An aside: It was said that Grandpa McGlone had a lovely singing voice. One of the songs he sang was "Daisy A Day" according to my mother. He wasn't called, "Lark" because he could sing. He was called "Lark" because he was nicknamed after a prize fighter.

The dining room had a huge table in it. You could seat a dozen people there. It was a homemade wooden table that Grandma always covered with printed oil cloth. I think she had chairs. I don't really remember there being a wooden bench. On the ceiling, there was a quilting frame. Grandma would let it down, and some of her friends would come for a quilting party. Also in the dining room was a cabinet for her dishes, a small refrigerator, and an old photograph player. It was one of those that were about four feet high with a handle on the side so that you could wind it up to play records. The player had speakers covered with burgundy, velvet cloth, and you could store records in the bottom on a shelf behind two doors.

The living room had a wooden heating stove. Uncle Howard had a chair right beside the stove. Grandma sat on a rocker right in the middle of the floor in front of the stove. Sometimes I sat beside her in a child's rocking chair and rocked with her. There was a long sofa in front of one window covered with lace curtains with little dark red flowers on them. (I used to sit on that couch and play with my mother's porcelain doll that had lost all its hair.) There was another chair for company that sat on the opposite wall with a little table covered with a dresser cloth with a donkey embroidered on it. Frequently, there was a pan of parched

corn on it. In the corner there was an old radio with buttons to preset radio stations. Grandma used to listen to the baseball games on it that were broadcast by KEX radio. On the front wall in front of the window was Grandma's treadle sewing machine. She never sewed with anything else. She made many quilts on this machine. The front door was right beside the sewing machine. The door had a skeleton lock on it, and there was a huge rock on the floor to keep the door open on hot days. On the wall there were some things I remember. One wall had a huge tapestry with a couple deer on it and some hunters. It was primarily dark red, gray and black. There was a large, oval portrait of my Uncle Flem hanging on the wall above Uncle Howard's chair. On the wall above the picture windows with the lace curtains, were three pictures. One was a picture of Jesus standing outside a garden door knocking. One was a picture of Jesus and his sheep. (You can see this picture sometimes in Christian book stores.) The last picture was a picture of Grandpa, Grandma, and my mother at about age 8 on the front porch. You can see this picture online.

Grandma's bedroom was behind the stove. You walked in. There was a dark closet to your left as you came in the door. Straight ahead was her dresser, a pale green dresser with a curvy front and old handles on it. She kept clothes in there, of course; but there were other things like a book of photographs. She gave me a bell that said, "Ring the Bell for Red Goose Shoes." I believe it came from Weiby's. Her double bed was to the left just past the closet.

There was a door that opened on the other side of the stove from where my Uncle Howard sat. When you went through the door, there was a small room to the right which Grandma used for storage. She had her buttons in a large round can, and there were many boxes in that room. This room had been my mother's bedroom growing up. To the left were the stairs leading upstairs. There must have been about 16 stairs because the ceilings were high in that house. At the top of the stairs were two bedrooms. One bedroom was green with a twin bed in it. The other bedroom was light colored with a three-quarter bed in it. I didn't know what that was. I thought it had a corner cut off. That room had fluorescent lights in it that crackled when they came on. There was a silhouette picture of a little girl on the wall I used to admire. There were two more bedroom when you walked beside the stair opening. The first room was my Uncle Howard's room. He had a huge desk in there covered with pennies. He always let me have all the pennies except for the steel 1943 pennies. There was a large, rolltop desk at the end of the hall. I would have liked to have that desk. I loved the cubbyholes and little drawers. There was a fourth bedroom just past the desk. I only was allowed to look in there once, and I think it was basically bare.

In the yard, Grandma had a lilac tree that was around ten feet tall and just as wide. It had the ordinary lavender flowers on it. There was also a gooseberry bush with strange translucent fruit from which she used to make gooseberry jam. The only other flowers I remember are pansies near the front gate. As a result, I have loved pansies all of my life - my favorite flower. The yard was surrounded by a dark gray fence. Grandma always had her back to the front, but she could hear the front gate squeak, and she usually knew who was coming in it. There was a small side porch. Frequently in the fall, Grandma had newspapers spread on it with apples drying on it. She canned applesauce, and she made apple butter out of the apples.

Grandma didn't drive. She walked with a long walking stick, or she got a ride. She didn't go shopping. Her groceries were delivered by the Hallberg delivery van which is now in the possession of the Rainier Oregon Historical Museum. There was a garage which nobody used until Uncle Howard's Volkswagen got stolen. He bought another car or got that one back. He painted it bright yellow and parked it in the garage.

I miss the old place, and my grandma. My grandma lived to be 101. All of my uncles and my mom have passed away as well as most of my cousins. The only ones left are my younger sister, my cousin, John, and me. However, there are many, many descendants from my uncles.

Martha (Davis) Van Natta  
[martha113@hotmail.com](mailto:martha113@hotmail.com)

24259 Van Natta Rd.  
Rainier, OR 97048

Please let me know if you have any additions, corrections, or comments. Thank you.

Martha Ann Van Natta is the daughter of Ada McGlone Davis. Ada was the youngest child, and only daughter, of James Fleming "Lark" McGlone, and Martha Ellen Burchett McGlone (Martha Van Natta's maternal grandparents).