

passed as White,” Dorothy stated. Dorothy said Lavinia went to Athens College, and passing as White would have been required in order for her to do that back then.

Dorothy said William Harris I had property and was farming it before slavery was abolished. Blacks who owned property couldn’t put it in their own name. She said he owned the property before 1867, but it was probably not recorded in his name. This was because of what could be termed social issues at that time in history. The warranty deed from William Holding was filed in 1874. The property was in T4, R2W, Section 26. Section 26 borders Anderson Road to the west, on Test Area 3.

Dorothy Foster had photocopies of the following deeds showing the history of the land ownership:

- December 30, 1839 Isaac Inman. Filed January 4, 1840. Deed of Trust. NW ¼, Sec. 26, R2W, Deed Book R., p. 363.
- November 22, 1841, John J. Coleman to William Robertson, Filed November 25, 1841, Deed of Trust. NW ¼, Sec. 26, T4, R2W.
- August 1, 1811, Wm. Robertson and Wife to William Holding. NW ¼, Sec. 26, T4, R2W, filed August 5, 1844, Warranty Deed, Deed Book V, p. 4.

Richard Holding deeded both the SW ¼ and the NW ¼ of Section 26 to his son William in 1856, prior to the Civil War. The deed for the southwest parcel shows it was a gift. The northwest parcel was probably a gift also.

- December 31, 1855, Richard Holding to William Holding, Deed of Gift. SW ¼, Sec. 26, T4, R2W, Filed April 24, 1856. Consideration: Love and Affection.

Dorothy said other papers say William Harris owned the west half of Section 26 in 1867. She said “He owned it and was farming it before slavery was abolished.” It is reasonable to suggest that if this occurred, it would have been associated with the fact that his father was a White man who might have overseen his welfare. During the course of talking with other families, it was found that in some cases early Black landowners did not have recorded deeds. When they died, reputable men who had lived in the community and had known them for many years signed sworn statements to attest to the land ownership of the deceased.

The ownership of the West ½ of Section 26 by William Harris I is without doubt, as evidenced by the Warranty Deed filed after his death on December 2, 1874 (Deed YY, p. 310). It shows his heirs and also lists his possessions and debts at the time of his death. The handwriting from the original document is difficult to read in many places, but it does provide insight about the home and farming of William Harris as it was in 1874, on the land that is now Test Area 3. It is evident that his household effects were simple ones needed in every-day life, and he had the essentials in tools and stock. It also shows he had two cotton gins.