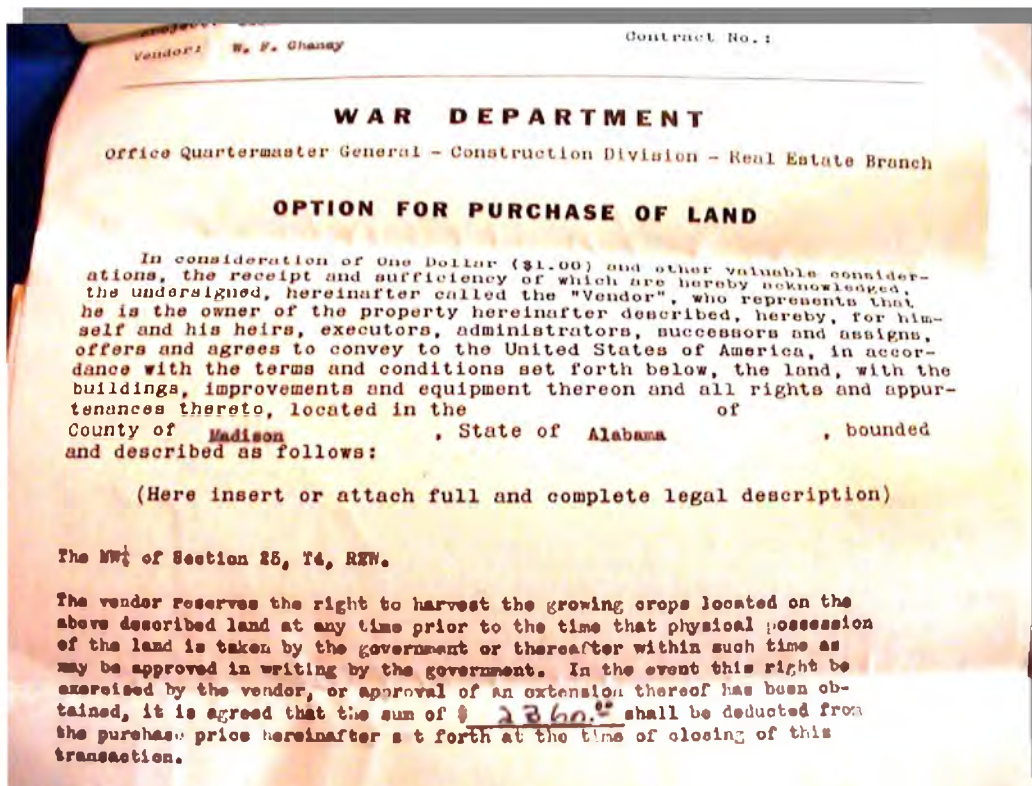


Walter F. Chaney Ownership of A-61 and Sale to the War Department

Bernice said:

We were told to move on August 15, 1941. We moved on December 21, 1941. We came out with a mule and a wagon and ten head of cows. Some people contested the sale until the last date. Then they were told if they didn't move, their property would be condemned. Some people never did get paid because they wouldn't make any settlement.



The War Department option for the purchase of the land. Photographed from original documents in the possession of Hosca Chaney.

The Option for Purchase allowed landowners to return to and harvest the crops that they had planted; however, as shown in the contract above, an agreed upon sum was deducted from the purchase price at the time of the closing of the transaction if they did so. The returning residents had to wear badges they were given to go through the guard gates; the gates had been set up before the people had moved off their land.

Walter Chaney moved to Early, Alabama, near where the Coosa Lake is now. At the end of WWII, it was rumored that the Army would sell the land back to its former owners. Walter wanted his land back—the land he'd spent many years clearing before the government took it. He moved back to Huntsville ready to buy it. The Army didn't sell the land back. After living in Huntsville Village for a number of years, Walter moved to Oleander [near Arab]. Mac Chaney (Walter's grandson) said:

During the last ten years of his life, my grandfather was blind as a result of sugar diabetes. Then he got pneumonia, which was the cause of his death. On the way to the hospital, and in tears, he said to me, "I wish I could have gotten my land back."

As for his father, Frank Chaney, Mac Chaney said: