

Harris farm are presented in the section of this manuscript entitled “The Harris Family: Life at the Big House (Lee House) and the Harris House.”

While he was in college, Walter worked for TVA in the summers. He went to jobs in Nashville, Watts Bar Dam, and Knoxville between age 16 and the Army. Walter majored in Agriculture. TVA had a co-op program, so during the co-op years he cleaned up and picked up. Walter said, “You had to be registered and go to school the next year. Then the co-op would match what you made on the job for school expenses. In later years, and with more education and experience, he worked with TVA on many other jobs.

During his teen years, Walter continued to have a second home with Mattie. Mattie had two daughters. Walter said: “I’d plant her a garden and work in it when I got back from Tennessee. When you room with somebody, you help them.”

Working at TVA during summers while a co-op student, Walter learned to use dynamite and to blow out stumps. He took a rod and drove it under the stump. Then put the dynamite under it at an angle. He went home to Pond Beat and removed unwanted stumps for the family.

Walter’s FFA project. Walter was a member of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) when he was in high school. He had a project to do in FFA--7 acres to farm. Most people grew cotton. He wanted to diversify, so he took one acre and planted sweet potatoes. In the fall, he stayed at home on weekends. When he got home from school, he would take the tractor out. He rigged it up to have two blades. Then he’d go up the road, taking with him brown bags that would hold a bushel. The women and children would pick the sweet potatoes and put them in a basket, and all he had to do was take them to the shed. The women did most of the work. In that year he made the same amount of money on just that one acre of sweet potatoes as others made on their whole crop of cotton, because cotton prices went down.

This may have been the time when Mr. Sam Harris, Sr. was giving him a ride back and forth to school at the beginning and end of the week, as Walter said that he learned about growing sweet potatoes from Sam Harris.

The First School Bus for Black Children

Walter stated:

We had no school bus in our neighborhood. The colored children walked to school, and when the White children went by on the school bus [on their way to Farley School], and we were walking. They’d stop [on their way to Farley School], and the bus driver would let them pick up rocks to throw at us. The bus driver’s son would be throwing them, too.