

option on it since 1918—an option to buy the timber. TVA ended up paying for the timber on that land.

When TVA was clearing swamps, they hauled the logs to the Tennessee River and built a raft—they'd drive spikes in a log and bind them together. Then he'd go down and get his chain and get the next raft ready. Had a little outboard motor to steer with. Had to keep in the channel and off the banks.

Walter said Triana had a boat dock at one time. The steamboat stopped there. The warehouses were still there in the 1930s. People took the boat to Decatur. The river was a key form of transportation.

Roosevelt and The New Deal

The “Pay on Demand” System. Walter described the existing system of “pay on demand” that was in common practice prior to the New Deal:

Before the Roosevelt system took over, there was a thing called “pay on demand.” That meant that if you bought something, most people would pay for it in the fall. You could then pay what you had after the crops came in, which was usually only 2/3 of the amount. The next year they would demand for you to pay for the rest. No one usually had enough to pay for the rest of it, so you would lose everything. The banker's friend could then pay the rest of it and acquire the land. That was done with most of the land on Whitesburg Drive [the names of specific prominent people who acquired their land in this manner have been omitted].

Walter said, “Poor Whites and the poor Blacks were treated the same when it came to taking their land.”

Loans for Tenant Farmers. Walter said that when President Roosevelt's administration began in the 1930's, a goal was to find farmers working as tenants and “make them homeowners.” It was the “New Deal program,” and its purpose was “to get out of the depression the country was in.” The tenant farmers could get a government loan that had a 3 percent interest rate. If a tenant farmer showed prospect, the government would build a house for his family on government standards. Walter explained:

They would put in a chicken house, a corral, a half-acre for a garden, and an acre for fruit trees—peach, apple, and pear trees. The government would give you a three percent loan for everything, but you had to set it up to their standards.