

Multi-Generational African American Farmers of the Midwest
Anna-Lisa Cox
Library of Congress AFC Archie Green Fellowship

Date of interview: July 24th, 2019

Names/s of those interviewed: Carolyn Sallee Walden (Part 1 of 2)

Primary Interviewer: Anna-Lisa Cox (ALC)

Secondary Interviewers: Photographer is Lishawna Taylor

Interview Location: Lyles Station Historical School Museum, Gibson County, Indiana

Transcriber: Mary Kamara-Hagemeyer

Abstract: Mrs. Carolyn Sallee Walden grew up on her parent's farm in Lawrence, County, Illinois. She is descended from the Goins – free people of color in Lawrence County. Her husband is descended from a long line of multi-racial farmers that came out and homesteaded the Indiana frontier before the Civil War. As Stephen Vincent pointed out in his book, *Southern Seed, Northern Soil*, the Waldens were long free from North Carolina before they came to Indiana, and claim an African-descended Patriot Revolutionary War soldier as an ancestor. Mrs. Walden's sister, Marva Green, is also recorded as part of this collection.

Mrs. Walden and her husband took part in an important case that went to the federal Supreme Court, over the mineral rights to their farmland. It was the first case heard by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

A quilt from Mrs. Walden's collection is now in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, and has been displayed in the exhibit on Lyles Station, Indiana.

Index/Log (5 Minute Time Stamped)
Mrs. C.S. Walden Log 1 of 2

[0:00] Introduction and explanation of project and research

[5:00] Sallee discusses moving from Lawrence county and marrying into a farming family.

[10:00] Sallee describes where she lived and worked the first few years of her marriage to Ulysses Walden. She lists when her children were born and where they moved to. Talks about her husband's love for farming and her enjoyment of work in the home.

[15:00] Describes the crops and animals raised on their farm in Gibson County, Indiana, and how the children helped out on the farm. Sallee explains she didn't work on the farm much but worked outside the home at various jobs to help support the farm. Discusses how difficult it became to obtain loans over the years.

[20:00] Sallee describes her vegetable garden and what was grown, as well as how certain crops were sold. Sallee's husband would fix up used vehicles and sell them. Sallee notes the sharing nature of the relationship between her and her in-law's households.

[25:00] Sallee's thoughts on the roots of her family and the races of those who marry into the family. Responds to ALC's question about her racial identity and talks about how she would like to be identified.

25-30

[30:00] Describes where she attended church. Remembers attending the Gibson county fair and her children's success in showing animals and crafts. Discusses the relationship between a certain neighbor couple and her children.

[35:00] Discusses daughter's love of quilting and the history of quilting in the family. Talk about the exhibit in the Smithsonian displaying a historic family quilt.

[40:00] Answers the question of in fifty years, what she would want her great-grandchildren to know about what was accomplished on the farm. Sallee emphasizes she would love her children to keep the land and handle it. Describes the differences in how generations use the land and reiterates that she and her husband fought to keep the land.

40-45

[45:00] Sallee discusses her trip to Lakeland Florida and how she was told to pretend she was Jewish to avoid being confronted for her racial heritage. She describes overhearing racist comments and slurs while those speaking were unaware of her ethnicity. Sallee's memories of how she and her husband met.

[50:00] The challenges of working the farm in the '70s and '80s. Talks about the determination of farmers to keep their land. Discusses the freedom of farming how happy she would be if more young people farmed.

[55:00] Describes life growing up on her parent's farm and relationships with her Grandmother's as a child. Inherited family ground which she still owns and rents out.

[60:00] Explains how she came to obtain Walden family materials and records. Discusses the importance of these objects and records with ALC. Begins to describe how their fight for mineral rights on their land was taken to the Supreme Court on the first day of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's first day on the bench.

[1:02] End of part 1 of this interview – interview continues in part 2 audio