



*Celebrating A  
90 Year Family Farming Legacy*

Walter and Ernestine Rawl were married on January 25, 1925. After the wedding, the couple moved to Walter's family home to live until they could get a house of their own. This is where the newlyweds reportedly planted the first cabbage plant—beginning the long lasting Walter P. Rawl farming legacy.



*Newlyweds Walter and Ernestine Rawl*



*The Rawl home in Gilbert, SC which still stands today*

Soon after, Walter obtained a small parcel of land on what is now Walter Rawl Road in Gilbert, SC. Walter was told by family members that he "would never make enough money off of that land to pay for it." Little did they know of Walter's wisdom and vision which would take the small truck farm primarily producing tomatoes, okra, corn, asparagus and peaches and grow it to be the leader it is in the farming industry today!



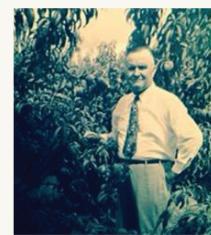
*Walter checking on okra fields*



*Girls picking peaches*



*Rawl packing shed*



*Walter in peach orchards*



*Walter inspecting baskets*

The family quickly grew with the birth of seven children, all of whom recall working on the farm as early as 6-7 years of age. Walter and Ernestine instilled in their children a deep respect for family traditions, willingness to work hard, dedication to God and mankind, challenge to be innovative, and responsibility to provide leadership in the industry and community. From those humble beginnings a small truck farm grew...and grew.





*Girl with tomato bucket*

Workers were paid based on the quantity of work done. On either a card or a piece of paper, a slash or a punch would be made for each basket or pan of items completed. It was considered an honor to be the person who punched the cards.



*Punch cards  
and puncher*





*Kitchen at the Rawl home*



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEBBI MORELLO/THE STATE  
Ernestine Rawl, 93, sits at the lunch table with her son, Wayne Rawl, as her grandson, Ashley Rawl, left, and daughter, Sue Wingard watch. The family's tradition is to meet for lunch to discuss its farming business.

*Growth: I never thought I'd see it to the degree it's reached'*

*Rawl family gathered at the lunch table*

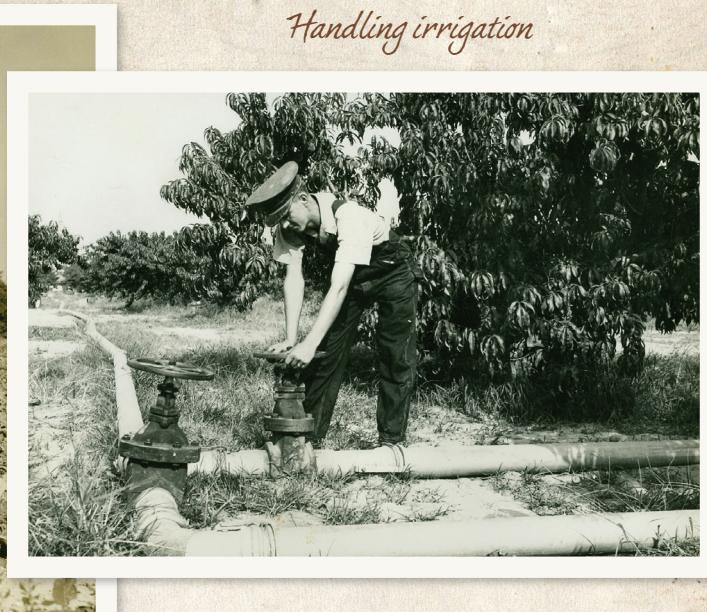
Lunch was served at the Walter Rawl home every day. All family members were expected to gather around the table at noon and someone always said a blessing. Family lunches gave adults a chance to talk about how things were going and how the crops looked. Even if there was a disagreement between family members, tension would often be dispelled during the lunch hour.

Ernestine continued to help with the cooking until she was 92 years old. To this day, the family eats lunch together on Tuesdays and Thursdays.





*Field workers*



*Handling irrigation*



*Howard Rawl in a sweet potato field*

During the 1930s and 40s following the Great Depression, the farm remained stable. It provided a needed source of income for local residents and family members to maintain their households.

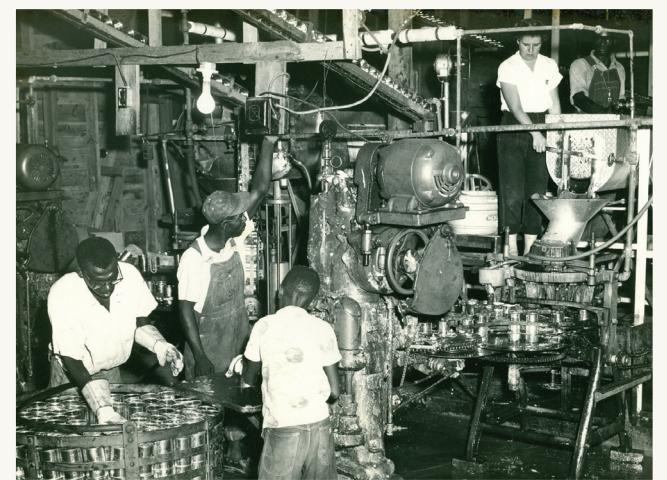


During World War II, open trucks filled with German prisoners from nearby Fort Jackson were seen moving through the town of Lexington. The prisoners were being taken to work on the farm.

Walter had a favorite saying, "SELL what you can and CAN what you can't." With that motto he established a cannery to ensure maximum utilization of all his crops.



Cannery





*Walter and Ernestine in peach orchard*



*Ernestine pruning peach trees*

Walter conducted the business aspect of the farm while Ernestine worked in the fields along with the workers until she was 78. Rain, sleet, snow, cold, heat, drought — none of those kept her from working.





*Irrigation equipment*



*Walter inspecting hydro-cooling*



*Wayne Rawl  
handling irrigation*



*Irrigation pond*

Walter's strong leadership, keen wisdom, and foresight led the family of farmers pioneer to such aspects as irrigation, hydro-cooling, exporting and food safety.



In the 1960's the farm began complementing the production of peaches with that of greens and other truck veg crops. This provided for more stable workloads and revenue.



*Walter and one of his cars*



*Walter inspecting collard fields*

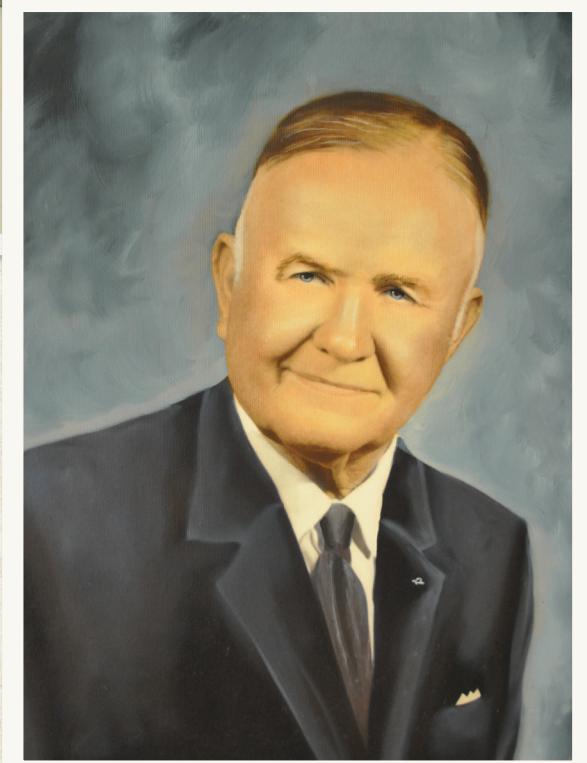
Walter was regularly seen driving one of his cars through the farm supervising all operations. He frequently wore dress pants because he had many meetings to attend, as he held many professional and civic leadership positions. Walter drove the cars like they were tractors or trucks through the fields, and very fast! Workers say they always knew when he was coming, because they would see a huge dust cloud in the fields.



Upon Walter's death in 1978, the matriarch of the family, Ernestine, and three of the Rawl children took the helm. Later they were joined by several of the grandchildren. With their continued hard work, innovation and dedication to meeting the ever changing needs of customers, the farm has grown exponentially in the last several decades.



*Walter 1950*



*Walter in the 1970s*



*Rawl family leaders today*





*Headquarters in Pelion, SC*

The farm is now a leader in the nation in securing and maintaining optimum food safety assurances for its customers. WP Rawl has its own internal department dedicated to continually monitoring food safety throughout the operation.





*Robert Clifton, fourth generation member in a corn field*



*Dean Rawl at work*



*Ashley Rawl in collard field*



*Howard and Dean inspecting equipment*

The farm is dedicated to sustainability through recycling, energy management, and protecting and conserving natural resources. It has been a leader in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and utilizes a field audit system in which data is constantly traced concerning land usage, seed variety, fertilizer history, pesticide control, supply source, employee hygiene and harvest practice.





*Some of WP Rawl's trucks today*



The company owns a fleet of 70 trucks to deliver products throughout the eastern two-thirds of the country. Distribution facilities are located in South Carolina, Florida and Mississippi. Delivery locations range from Miami to Maine, Texas to Iowa and all points in between.





*The Nature's Greens brand is prominent in stores across the US*

With these and other advances, WP Rawl is one of few farms in the country that covers all aspects including planting, harvesting, processing, packaging, selling and delivering of products. A continued emphasis on meeting public demands for ensuring maximum nutrition and ease in food preparation has led to the development of several value-added product lines in the past few years.





*Kale field*

The farm's newest emphasis has been on the production of kale. What began as a crop solely for sale as garnish now represents more than 50% of the farm's fresh cut business.





*Charles Wingard speaks at United Fresh*



*Mary Grace Wingard  
in collard fields*



*Mary Grace with  
South Carolina  
Gov. Nikki Haley*

The Rawl family is quick to attribute their success to two other groups of individuals... dedicated and hardworking employees and a strong and loyal customer base. They freely acknowledge the farm would not be where it is today without them and demonstrate a sincere sense of value and appreciation for both groups.

The WP Rawl leadership continues the legacy of its founders by advocating for the industry. Lobbying for legislation for the 2006 Farm Bill, immigration standards, and more consistent food safety regulations are just a few examples of important work they have done. Family members have served on national boards and testified before congressional committees on behalf of farmers when needed.





*Charles and Katie's Krops students*



*Students learn about alternative vegetable beds*

A strong commitment to education and exemplary community outreach efforts allow the farm to make a positive impact on society as a whole, while also reaching out to potential future farmers. One of the farm's most recent initiatives is to provide grants for school gardens in local school districts. WP Rawl has also partnered with Katie's Krops to promote nutrition education and sponsors an annual camp for outstanding students from all over the United States.





WP Rawl is excited about the possibilities for the future. With the world's growing emphasis on healthy eating and the farm's commitment to strong family traditions, pride in quality of service and product, and dedication to leadership in the industry and community, "the sky is truly the limit" for what can happen in the years to come.



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Veggies®

