



The Truman Farm



The Grandview farm house, circa 1910. Credit: Truman Library

In 1906, Harry Truman's widowed maternal grandmother, Harriet Young, owned a 600-acre farm in Grandview, Missouri; a lot of property for an 88-year-old woman to manage. She needed help.

Twenty miles north and five years earlier

Up in Independence in 1901, Harry Truman's father, John, lost virtually all the family owned in a series of unfortunate investments. After scraping by for a few years, in 1905 the Truman family (John, wife Martha, son John Vivian, and daughter

Mary Jane) decided to move to Grandview and operate the farm for Grandmother Young. Harry joined the rest of his family in 1906. He was 22 years old, quiet and bashful, and had never farmed a day in his life.

Harry Truman, Farmer

Harry Truman learned the farming trade quickly, however. He wrote, "I thought maybe by cussing mules and plowing corn I could perhaps overcome my shyness and amount to something."

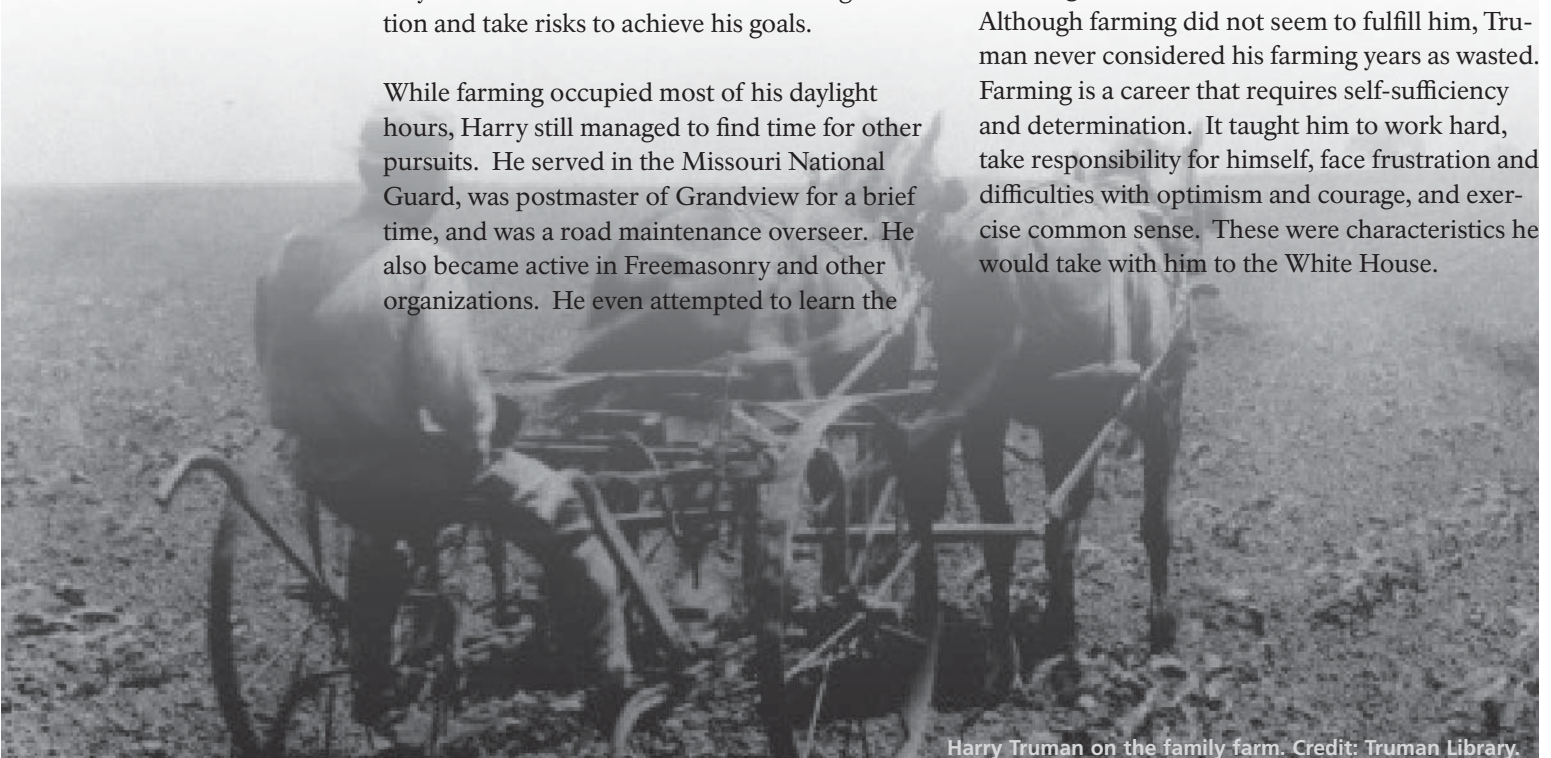
In 1914, his father died and Harry assumed full responsibility for the farming operation. During his eleven years on the farm, Harry managed to free the gregarious and sociable aspects of his personality. He also learned to administer an organization and take risks to achieve his goals.

While farming occupied most of his daylight hours, Harry still managed to find time for other pursuits. He served in the Missouri National Guard, was postmaster of Grandview for a brief time, and was a road maintenance overseer. He also became active in Freemasonry and other organizations. He even attempted to learn the

clarinet so he could play in the town band. His most pleasurable pursuit, however, was his courtship with Bess Wallace, whom he had known since childhood in Independence. The courtship, which did not begin until Harry had returned to the farm, led to their wedding in 1919. Upon his marriage, Harry left the farm for good and moved back to Independence.

Farming Influences

Although farming did not seem to fulfill him, Truman never considered his farming years as wasted. Farming is a career that requires self-sufficiency and determination. It taught him to work hard, take responsibility for himself, face frustration and difficulties with optimism and courage, and exercise common sense. These were characteristics he would take with him to the White House.



Harry Truman on the family farm. Credit: Truman Library.