

Marsh's move from agricultural to industrial work mirrored the actions of many southern African American men in the years following World War I. As more African Americans shifted from supplemental work in the lumber industry to year-round employment, family and community dynamics shifted as well. Their efforts included unionizing for higher wages and moving to company towns where children attended school and women found opportunities to earn income through domestic and commercial work. (2) In the sawmill town of McNary, Amos's wife Mary charged a small amount for driving people to town to shop: "Mary loved to drive and she loved making a little money on her own."

Between 1920 and 1960, an unknown number of African American loggers and sawmill workers migrated from farms and sawmills in the Deep South to new mill towns and logging camps being constructed across the Southwest and northern California and to the pine forests of Oregon. (3) According to Marsh, "every Tom, Dick, and Harry was hoboin' and going somewhere" in search of jobs. Those workers created a large pool of southern African American timber workers whose numbers rose from 83,000 in 1910 to 180,000 in 1950. (4) The timber industry in the South had grown during the bonanza that began in the mid to late nineteenth century and with the advent of new technologies and finance, expanded rapidly in the early twentieth century. By 1920, Louisiana boasted the second largest timber industry in the country. (5) Much of the state's timber resources, however, were depleted by the mid 1920s, and many mills closed. (6)

The rich pine forests on the White Mountain Apache Reservation in Arizona attracted numerous speculators, such as W.M. Cady and James McNary, who were abandoning dwindling lumber operations in the South. In 1923, Cady and McNary purchased a failing lumber company and its holdings in Cooley, Arizona, renamed the town McNary, and moved their equipment, and workers and their families, many of them Black, to Arizona. (7) Marsh arrived in McNary in 1932