

pay to conserve. Until then there is no inducement to save and develop, for the effort would result in loss." The lumberman's standard cry was that forestry was not practical, while, as an editorialist in *American Forestry* magazine pointed out, "the claim is continually made by individual lumbermen and lumber journals that their business is conducted at a loss, that the only money made in it is by speculation in timberlands. If that is true lumbermen as a whole are a most unpractical class." The editorial pointed out that the days of logging and lumbering the virgin forests were nearing their end. "The lumbermen of the future will be foresters," it said, "The difficulty now is that lumbering is still in the hands of men of the old idea . . . seeking large and quick returns. . . . But the great and quick profits of the old days of lumbering accessible virgin forests are gone. . . . It is necessary for [lumbermen] to readjust their view and to recognize forests as a resource in the perpetuation and permanent productiveness of which the whole people have an interest that must dominate any private interest."²

People hired in the 1930s and 1940s were among the pioneers in the development of southern forestry. As late as the 1930s the number of people trained and employed as professional foresters by private industry in the South was minuscule. [Inman F. "Cap"] Eldredge remembers that on graduation from the Biltmore Forest School in 1905, "there were very few openings in forestry. If you couldn't get into the Forest Service, you were stymied. The chances in industry were very few at that time." Richard Allen, a native Mississippian trained in forestry at the University of Georgia, said that when he went to work for the DeWeese Lumber Company of Philadelphia, Mississippi, "I was probably the first forester that they ever had in that part of Mississippi, and there just wasn't any forestry going on. Just about that period of time is when forestry got born."³

Allen also recalled that when Art Nelson went to work for Flintkote in Meridian, "I was still the only [forester] that was operating in that part of the world. . . . And I thought it was great that this land was sold to a company that had a forester. Nelson went to work for Flintkote in 1940, handling the forestry and timber procurement for a new wood fiber insulation board mill. Nelson later recalled that he was immediately impressed by the "incredibly fast timber growth" and the fact that "if nature was given just half a chance—a little fire protection—saving some seed trees—the forest would start on its way back." International Paper Company forester Buff Reaves was the first professional forester in Leake County, Mississippi. "I think Mr. Buff was Mr. Forester of Leake County, really," said Allen, "because there weren't any technical foresters there until IP moved in."⁴

Another early professional forester—and a native Mississippian—was J. R. Weston, who earned a forestry degree from the University of Washington in 1921 and became "as far as I know, the first native Mississippian to acquire a Forestry degree." Said Weston, "When I first graduated from forestry there was only one other Forestry graduate in Mississippi." Weston returned to Mississippi to work for the family-owned H. Weston Lumber Company. Also among the pioneering Mississippi foresters was James W. Craig, a native of Panola County, who earned a bachelor's of science degree in forestry from Purdue University in 1936 and a master's degree from the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse in 1938. Craig served as chief of fire control for the Mississippi Forestry Commission after World



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Richard C. Allen, forester for DeWeese Lumber Company, shown by the company's 40,000-acre Tree Farm. Allen was one of the early foresters hired by industry in the southern U.S.

War II, became a consulting forester, and established a major forestry supply house in 1948. He also claimed to be, along with two other men, one of the first consulting foresters in the state. In 1952 Craig became the Mississippi state forester, serving until 1955, when he returned to his consulting business and forestry supply operation.⁵

One of the legendary early Mississippi foresters was not formally trained. P. N. "Posey" Howell was a native of Alabama and lived in Howison, Mississippi. For many years he was an employee of the L. N. Dantzler Lumber Company. By the early 1930s Howell had been employed by the Dantzlars for more than forty years and was serving as their land manager. Using wild stock, Howell planted one of the earliest pine plantations in Mississippi, and he was also famous for convincing company officials to leave seed trees. He called these trees "Mother Trees" and marked them with two-by-three-inch tags that read "This is a Mother Tree. DO NOT CUT" or a similar message. Ray Conarro of the Forest Service later remembered, "Usually these trees were spike top or so crooked that very little lumber could be cut from them."⁶

The stories about Howell are the stuff of legend. In the early years he traveled five counties on horseback selling the gospel of forestry and fire prevention. He followed a razorback hog for eight hours to learn that it uprooted more than five hundred longleaf saplings and prepared a placard showing that the hog destroyed more seedlings in a day than a man could plant in a