



Regarded as a foolish visionary, Henry E. Hardtner of Urania Lumber Company purchased cutover lands in the south as early as 1904–1905.

ical preservation. Their efforts eventually contributed to acceptance of the multiple-use concept, but other uses were always subordinate to sustaining the forests as suppliers of timber. Companies that practiced conservation did so because they believed it would pay.¹⁰

Several southern lumbermen and firms stand out as pioneers in the realization that their timberlands might be held and regenerated profitably. First was Henry Hardtner of the Urania Lumber Company in north-central Louisiana. Hardtner's was not a big operation by the standards of the industry giants, but his hands-on approach, close to the lands and the mill, produced significant long-term dividends for the South. Hardtner reacted strongly against the efforts of many lumber companies to unload their land for agricultural usage once it had been cut over. Hardtner derided the Southern Pine Association's 1917 cutover land conference as "a big scheme to try to sell land that was not worth while for agriculture at all," and he later charged that the entire plan was "just a skin game to fool people in the north and west, to think that they could make a whole lot of money out of poor lands." Hardtner was absolutely correct in his negative assessment of the suitability of cutover lands for agricultural use. A 1920 description of farming on cutover lands is typical: "Anyone who has ever seen the cut over pine land, where the people are trying to farm ought to realize the sadness of this situation. I don't know which is the sadder, the devastation of pine lands, or the people who are trying to live on them. Year after year these people go on . . . and try to farm on this land. It is so poor that it will scarcely grow peanuts, but still they go on there."¹¹

At the time Hardtner first became interested in the regeneration of his lands, virtually no scientific information was available regarding the reproductive abilities of southern pine, so as he later recalled, "At first I had to pioneer every step in my investigation of the reproduction of longleaf pine. I thought it would take 60 to 100 years to grow a merchantable crop. No one could tell me what was possible, no yield tables . . . were then available. I had to work out the problem for myself." The fact was that the "virgin" forest that had been harvested by the lumbermen of the "cut out and get out" era was not a typical forest. Thomas C. Clark observed, "The fact that ring counts made on stumps in this area revealed excessively long life spans did not necessarily indicate that it took so much time to produce a marketable tree." Or, as Nelson later noted, the trees harvested by the cut-out-and-get-out lumbermen "consisted of 200-300 hundred-year-old survivors in a wild and uncared-for forest. This gave rise to the idea that no one could wait that long for another crop of trees to mature."¹²

Hardtner implemented three policies to restore his lands. First, he tried to control fires and hogs; second, he enforced a diameter limit on the trees to be harvested; and third, he insisted that seed trees be left on each acre logged. Hardtner was regarded as a foolish visionary by many of his more practical contemporaries. He later recalled ironically that "you didn't hear any of them talking about putting timber back on the land did you?" Nonetheless Hardtner had faith in what he was doing, with the best evidence



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Austin Cary, shown here in a Florida pine forest in 1932, had a great skill in making technical forestry procedures understandable to landowners.