

But they ignited the interest of Francis Harper, his younger brother, and a group of biologists at Cornell University.⁴ In 1912, these scientists began a series of biological explorations of the Okefenokee Swamp that continued for over three decades. They also began promoting efforts to preserve the Okefenokee as a biological preserve. But they too were voices crying in the wilderness.

Meanwhile, the Hebard Cypress Company, Twin Tree Lumber Company, and Council Lumber Company (Americus Mfg. Co.) continued to build logging railroads on piling through the towering cypress bays. Hundreds of loggers downed the great trees to be hauled to the mills at Hebardville near Waycross, at Hopkins on the northern rim of the Swamp, and at Council on the southern rim near the Florida border.

In 1911, J.F. Wilson moved to Waycross. He edited and published the *Nut Grower*, a journal promoting the cultivation and marketing of pecans.⁵ Dr. Wilson developed a special interest in the natural history of the Okefenokee. During the next six years Dr. Wilson and the Cornell biologists became devoted to the great morass and concerned about its future. They organized an effort to preserve the Okefenokee Swamp as a biological preserve in 1918. The opening speech of the campaign was made to the Progress Club in Waycross on July 18, 1918. Two days later the Waycross *Journal-Herald* published a letter from James G. Needham of Cornell. He strongly advocated the preservation of the Swamp. In August 1918 the Okefenokee Society was organized as a means to coordinate preservation efforts. By October the fledgling conservation society was beginning to take form around a core of interested scientists.⁶

J.F. Wilson enlisted the support of the Waycross Progress Club and the Waycross Chamber of Commerce in publicizing the goals of the Society in February 1919. In March, Wilson formed an Organization Committee. An Okefenokee Society meeting was called for June 3-4, 1919. J.D. Hazeman and S.W. McCallie,

⁴ Francis Harper, "Report of Expedition into the Okefenokee Swamp," *Bird Lore*, (16), 1912, 402-407; Chester Bradley to J.G. Needham, July 1, 1911. J.C. Bradley, "The Cornell Expedition to Okefenokee Swamp," *Cornell Countryman*, February 1913, 130-133.

⁵ Savannah *Morning News*, January 3, 1912.

⁶ Waycross *Journal-Herald*, July 19, 1918; July 20, 1918; September 4, 1918; September 21, 1918; J.F. Wilson to James G. Needham, August 19, 1918; Wilson to Needham, September 17, 1918; J.F. Wilson to Tentative Members of Okefenokee Society, October 15, 1918 (includes List of Tentative Members of Okefenokee Society).