

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

The Okefenokee Swamp was designated as a "Wetland of International Importance" in 1986. The Okefenokee is an excellent example of a large regional wetland complex possessing a significant diversity of habitats. This recognition highlights the Swamp's importance for wildlife and the exploitation by people of its vast array of natural resources. The Swamp has played an important role in many groups' history and folklore. Floyds Island and the Hebard Cabin typify the late 19th - mid-20th century commercial, scientific, and recreational uses of the Swamp.

Logging the Swamp

The State of Georgia sold approximately 238,120 acres of the Swamp to the Suwanee Canal Company for \$63,101.80 in 1891. Later transactions brought the total acreage to about 258,239 acres. This company attempted to drain the Swamp as well as to float out millions of feet of timber. The company president and principal promoter, Captain Henry Jackson, died in 1895. The venture collapsed in 1897. Pope Barrow, representing members of the Jackson family, purchased the property from the court for \$130,000 in 1899.

With the depletion of white pine timber in New England and the Great Lakes area and the development of industrial wetland logging technology at the end of the 19th century, the large untapped stands of cypress and longleaf pine attracted the attention of large lumber barons, such as Charles Hebard of Philadelphia. The Hebard family purchased the Jackson Estate property in 1901 for \$175,000. Additional acreage was acquired in 1902. Charles Hebard died in June 1902. His sons, Charles S. Hebard and Daniel L. Hebard, formed the Hebard Lumber Company of Georgia in 1904. The company leased their timber rights to the Hebard Cypress Company of West Virginia which was organized in 1908. A large cypress sawmill was built at Hebardville near Waycross and a railroad was constructed to the northwest side of the Swamp. The Hebard Cypress Company began logging operations in 1909. Logging railroads and spurs were constructed throughout the Swamp, including Floyds Island, to facilitate removal of the cypress and pine logs (Map 3). By 1918, the company had built a small logging community on north end of Billys Island. About 600 individuals and families occupied the village until 1926. By 1919, Hebard Cypress Company had cut most of the merchantable cypress timber in the Swamp's northwestern section and began to harvest timber around Billys Island. The logging railroad was extended to Floyds Island by 1922. Harvested timber was transported via rail to Hebardville.

As the Hebard family was logging cypress in the center of the Okefenokee, other companies logged pine and cypress on its periphery. The Americus Manufacturing Company purchased lands in the southwestern section of the Swamp and built a sawmill at Council in 1910. They logged cypress in this section until 1926. The Twin-Tree Lumber Company of Alabama built a pine sawmill in Hopkins, a former logging camp of the Hebard Cypress Company, in 1917. The company leased pine timber stands from the Hebard Cypress Company. They used the Hebard railroad to haul pine logs from many islands - Billys, Minnies, Honey, Blackjack - to the Hopkins mill. Twin Tree built a logging camp on the end of the Pocket in 1918. These two companies employed 1600-2000 men. The Twin Tree Lumber Company leased the turpentine rights to pines on Billys Island and other uplands to the Darling Turpentine Company in 1919. Twin Tree Lumber Company cut the pines in 1921.

John M. Hopkins served as the Hebard Cypress Company's General Superintendent between 1908-1920. He was succeeded by A. J. Armstrong and H.S. Quarterman. Hopkins was employed as an agent for the Company until 1937. Hopkins' description of the Swamp in his memoir, *45 Years with the Okefenokee Swamp*, and his subsequent experiences as timber cruiser and superintendent for the Hebard Cypress Company as well as McQueen and Mizell's *History of Okefenokee Swamp* reflect the Swamp's importance and how it has stamped an indelible impression on its inhabitants and casual visitors. Hopkins described a variety of habitats during his timber cruises as well as the home sites of the Lees and Chessers. He estimated that 400,000,000 board feet of cypress timber were available for commercial harvest - an amount which the Hebard family felt warranted the expenditure of funds for camps and logging railroads (Map 2).

The Hebard Cypress Company harvested cypress, pine, red bay, swamp black gum, white bay, maple, live oak, and sweet gum for timber and pulp between 1908-1927. The sweet gum was used for pulp. The pines of Billys, Bugaboo, and Chesser Islands, and near Camp Cornelia produced gum used for spirits, turpentine, and resin. Table 2 gives Hopkins' estimate of the harvest by the Hebard Cypress Company, Twin Tree Lumber Company, and other companies that leased timber rights from the Hebard Lumber Company. Hopkins' statistics were derived from company records available when he was writing his memoirs in 1943-45. The figures apparently do not include the harvest of the American Manufacturing Company, G.S. Baxter Lumber Company, K3S Lumber Company, Johnson & Sons Lumber Company, Braganza Lumber Company, and Knabb. The figures may be as much as 30-40% low, a fact confirmed by the late Ralph Davis.