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FLORIDA LIVE OAK FARM OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

by WILLIAM R. ADAMS*

The preservation of America's forests did not become a vital concern much before the end of the nineteenth century. The five laws that Congress passed prior to 1873 dealing specifically with the woodlands resulted primarily from a determination to insure an adequate supply of timber for the navy. The live oak, indigenous to the southern coastal area of the United States, was the principal object of the first three laws, the Naval-Timber Purchase Act of 1799 and the two Naval-Timber Reserve acts of 1817 and 1827. Highly prized by shipbuilders for its extremely hard and durable wood, the live oak also prompted President John Quincy Adams to order established in West Florida a tree plantation, which became America's first serious experiment in forest management and woodlands conservation. Unfortunately for the future of America's forests, Adams' plan expired in the snarled web of Jacksonian politics. During its brief life, however, the West Florida project strengthened awareness within the Congress and the administration to the threat against the forests by continuing depredations, and it left a residue of preventive law in the Timber Trespass Act of 1827. The episode revealed that not all Americans in that era shared a presumption that the nation's forests were inexhaustible, and it produced for a heedless posterity a genuine champion of conservation in the person of John Quincy Adams.

The qualities of the live oak were recognized long before the American Revolution, when it had already become a staple article of export to the West Indies and Europe. The angular shape of its limbs and roots admirably designed the tree's timber for the curved section of ship's hulls. Naval officers especially appreciated the resilient fiber of the close-grained wood for warship construction. The tremendous demand for its timber had provoked a lively plunder of the southern coastal

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belt of live oaks, arousing apprehension over the tree's survival even before the establishment of a navy. John Jay was among the first of the young nation's officials to express concern over the continuing availability of ship timber, warning that it would become scarce unless measures were taken to prevent waste. President Washington's revenue commissioner, Tench Coxe, also urged action to protect naval stores.¹

Enthusiastic as they were about the live oak's qualities, officials of the nation's fledgling navy in the 1790s were doubly concerned about its preservation. John Humphreys, charged with supervising construction of the navy's first six frigates, testified in 1794 that live oak timber remained durable in ships for forty to fifty years and was "greatly superior to any in Europe."² More than one navy secretary took pains to advertise the advantages that would accrue to American warships by constructing them of live oak and to alert the Congress to threats against the tree. James McHenry warned in 1797 that "the land which is clothed with it may pass into hands that may make its attainment hereafter more expensive, if not impracticable."³ Benjamin Stoddert used the French crisis to impress upon the Congress a need for measures to assure supply of the timber from easily accessible coastal stands. He combined a warning of its increasing scarcity with a recommendation that the legislators appropriate \$100,000 to secure the necessary timber. The Congress responded by passing the Timber Act of 1799, which authorized the President to spend twice that amount to purchase timber or timber lands and to preserve them for future use.⁴ Relying no doubt upon the object lesson afforded

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1. Jenks Cameron, *The Development of Governmental Forest Control in the United States* (Baltimore, 1928), 28-29; Richard G. Lillard, *The Great Forest* (New York, 1947), 161.
 2. Report of John Humphreys, December 23, 1794, in *American State Papers, Documents, Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States, Naval Affairs*, 4 vols. (Washington, 1832-1861), I, 8-9.
 3. James McHenry to John Parker, January 11, 1797, in *ibid.*, 26-27. This may be an early indication of apprehension over transfer to France of Spain's territories along the gulf coast, which harbored major stands of live oak.
 4. Benjamin Stoddert to the chairman of the house naval committee, December 29, 1798, in *ibid.*, 65-66; Samuel Trask Dana, *Forest and Range Policy: Its Development in the United States* (New York, 1956), 46. Two islands situated close to the Georgia coast were subsequently purchased.

by the naval with England, the navy secretary declared to the president of the senate in 1814 that "the importance of securing for *public use* all that valuable species of oak . . . is sufficiently obvious."⁵ Under the 1817 law the secretary of the navy was empowered to withhold from public sale lands containing live oak and red cedar for the sole purpose of supplying timber for naval use. Penalties were provided for unauthorized removal of timber from all public lands. Two agents and a surveyor appointed under authority of the 1817 act subsequently examined the Alabama and Louisiana coasts. As a result of their report President James Monroe in 1820 reserved lands in Louisiana from sale and appointed an agent to protect them.⁶

Nevertheless the trees continued to disappear. The plunder of timber from public reserves, executed in ways perfected in more than a century of practice, persisted in the face of a toothless government policy. Navy Secretary Samuel L. Southard told Congress in 1827 that more than one-half of the timber in the accessible coastal areas of Florida had been removed, much of it from public lands. An agent sent by Southard to survey the situation there reported back that the St. Johns River and its tributary streams below Jacksonville were stripped bare up to fifteen miles inland. Live oak, in fact, remained a staple export. As much as 2,000,000 cubic feet may have been removed, Southard said, most of it probably "consumed abroad." Southard sent his report to Congress in response to a house resolution passed on January 12, 1827, which instructed the committee on naval affairs "to inquire into the expediency of providing, by law, for the more effectual preservation of live oak timber on the public lands" and "to inquire into the expediency of forming plantations for the rearing of live oak timber." Further, the secretary was ordered to report back on measures taken to preserve the live oak.⁷

The house resolution, which with Southard's recommendations revealed a quickened interest in America's woodlands

5. Cameron, *Governmental Forest Control*, 31.

6. A short resume of efforts to protect timber is contained in a letter from Samuel L. Southard to Henry R. Storrs, February 26, 1827, in *American State Papers*, III, 47-48. See also Dana, *Forest and Range Policy*, 46-47.

7. Southard to Storrs, February 26, 1827, in *American State Papers*, III, 48. Southard quotes from the resolution.

that year, provided the impetus for the eventual establishment of the Santa Rosa plantation in West Florida. Joseph M. White, Florida's territorial delegate, who became a controversial figure in the venture, introduced the resolution into the house. It was not his brainchild, however. The real initiative was undoubtedly provided by President Adams, whose concern for the future of America's forests was translated into the rising tempo of activity in the navy department.

A resolution of the House of Representatives in 1826 suggesting the cultivation of mulberry trees for silkworms first drew Adams' attention to silviculture, and prompted him to begin research on the cultivation of plants and trees.⁸ That same evening Adams confided to his diary his regret that he had in the past neglected this absorbing subject and he proposed to himself that come autumn he would start a nursery. He immediately began inquiring into the possibility of raising oaks. His diary entries for the next several days reflected his newly discovered passion. The President now directed his evening strolls through oak shrubbery from which he invariably selected various leaves and branches for closer study, and he badgered his overseas consuls to procure for him works by foreign scholars on silviculture.⁹

Adams pestered others as well. He urged acquaintances embarking for travel abroad to inquire about foreign plants which might prove useful for his experiments. The White House gardener apparently bore the brunt of his gentle harrassment. "I ask the name of every plant I see," Adams wrote, and on every visit to the garden "inquiries multiply upon me." Letters devoted to silviculture and boxes of shrubs, plants, and acorns began arriving at the White House. So absorbed did he become that he began to neglect his evening walks, and on the occasion of one visit to the race track he even retrieved a dogwood

8. Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams: Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795-1848*, 12 vols. (Philadelphia, 1874-1877), VII, 121-22. "I should have commenced this project at least thirty years since," Adams wrote. See also Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union* (New York, 1956), 122-23.

9. Adams, *Memoirs*, VIP, 121-23; John Quincy Adams to Charles Francis Adams, May 5, 1828, John Quincy Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

blossom.¹⁰ He expressed delight in the progress made by sixty cork oak plants from Spain that he had planted in the White House nursery, and he mentioned receiving plants and seeds from as far away as Brazil and Morocco.¹¹

The depth, sincerity, and purpose of Adams' feeling for the conservation and replenishment of America's plants and trees has been largely overlooked by historians and biographers. He regarded his labors as more than a congenial hobby; they served as a legacy for his country. By devoting all his leisure moments to his plants, he wrote his son George, "I think I am answering the great ends of my existence." He doubted that even a lifetime was enough to realize the "lasting public benefits" to be derived from the work. "I am observing the operations of nature, with a view to ascertain some of her laws, and the ultimate object is to preserve the precious plants native to our country from the certain destruction to which they are tending. . . ." ¹²

Adams nursed a lurking anxiety lest his passionate devotion to plants die with him. He endeavored gently in touching letters to his sons to persuade them to adopt his own interest, feeling he had too little time remaining in life to complete his experiments. He impressed upon George that his work would "prove abortive unless one or more of my sons can partake of my feelings, and acquire a relish for the occupations which the cultivation of long-lived trees require."¹³ He likewise recognized the ultimate necessity of awakening the American people to the urgency of preserving and restoring the nation's forests. Although plant cultivation was one of the most important branches of political economy, he noted, it received scarcely any attention in this country. The powerful nations of Europe devoted voluminous legislation to the subject and accorded close ministerial supervision to plant cultivation, but this country had almost totally neglected it. In a revealing passage he wrote Charles:

10. Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 262, 267-68, 288. See also Adams' Letterbook, Adams Papers, for the year 1827.

11. John Quincy Adams to Charles Francis Adams, May 28, 1828, Adams Papers.

12. John Quincy Adams to George W. Adams, July 1828, *ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

My purpose is as far as may be in my power to draw the attention of my countrymen to it. In my public station I have taken such measures as were practicable to stir up the spirit of Congress to some estimation of its importance. Without much success. I am convinced that the object must be pursued systematically, and that to accomplish a result worthy of the conception more than one life must be devoted to it.¹⁴

Adams pursued his plant studies and experiments with a desperate intensity, refurbishing his spirits in the nursery when the burdens and cares of office depressed him. But he remained ever conscious of the practical side of his hobby. "I shall plant, if at all, more for the public than for myself," he said at the outset.¹⁵ Thus he concentrated his efforts upon raising the kinds of trees that could replenish woods depleted of useful timber. "My passion is for hard, heavy, long-lived wood, to be raised from the nut or seed—requiring a century to come to maturity and then to shelter, shade or bear Columbia's thunder o'er the deep for one or two centuries more." The forest he would plant could no longer serve him in life, he wrote Charles, but from it "your great grandson may bend the knees of a three decker to supply the place of the *Pennsylvania*, now on the stocks at Philadelphia." His intention was never "mere trifling." He wanted to develop some sort of affirmative project to put his experiments to a practical use.¹⁶

The recommendations that Navy Secretary Southard submitted to Congress in company with his report embodied just such a project. Declaring that the great importance of the future wants of the navy compelled it "to use all means in our power to obtain, preserve, and increase" the supply of timber, Southard suggested the adoption of four significant measures: the purchase of valuable tracts of land containing good quality timber adjacent to navigable waters; legislative provisions to strengthen the executive's power to reserve, survey, and protect timberlands in Florida and Louisiana; the planting of trees upon

14. John Quincy Adams to Charles Francis Adams, May 11, 1828, *ibid.*

15. Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 121.

16. John Quincy Adams to Charles Francis Adams, April 20, 1828, Adams Papers; Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 323-24.

government lands, probably the two islands off the Georgia coast or near the navy yard at Pensacola; and finally, the preemptive purchase of timber from individuals owning private stands before they were sold elsewhere or destroyed. He said that if this timber were not immediately used it could be stock-piled for the future when its quality would have improved through seasoning.¹⁷

Months before he approached the Congress, Southard had moved to implement his recommendations. In the summer of 1827, he dispatched two agents to examine and survey lands in West Florida for a favorable live oak plantation site. In December he informed President Adams that a large tract adjoining the navy yard at Pensacola had been selected and that he had ordered the commandant to begin planting live oaks.¹⁸ The secretary made his choice against the recommendations of his two agents, who reported to him in November that the peninsula extending between Pensacola Bay and Santa Rosa Sound, which Southard favored, contained soil that was unsuitable for the cultivation of live oaks.¹⁹ So adamantly, in fact, did Agent Thomas F. Cornell oppose the navy department's choice that Southard eventually dismissed him.

The location of Santa Rosa Sound doubtlessly influenced Southard's decision. Surrounded almost entirely by water, it afforded easy access to the heavy timber. The entire reservation near Pensacola comprised some 60,000 acres, most of it resting on unsold public lands that the government could withhold from sale under the 1817 and 1827 laws. There remained on the Santa Rosa nursery site, however, several small private holdings whose titles were originally granted by the Spanish government. Southard requested authority from Congress to purchase those tracts, amounting perhaps to 3,000 acres, and simultaneously began efforts to clear the titles. Months of tortuous legal effort were required to remove the old claims and insure transfer of title to the government. Joseph White, who in addition to being Florida's territorial delegate was a close associate of President

17. Southard to Storrs, February 26, 1827, in *American State Papers*, III, 49.

18. Report of the navy secretary to the President, December 1, 1827, in *ibid.*, III, 931. He also ordered some timber lands in Alabama and Louisiana withheld from sale.

19. Report of Charles Haire and Thomas F. Cornell, November 12, 1827, in *ibid.*, III, 944.

Adams and Secretary Southard, played a principal role in the transactions as the legal agent for both the landowners and the government. In most cases he acted as an intermediary to facilitate the transfers of deed, buying the land in Florida and selling it in Washington. If White profited he did not gain much, surely not enough to compensate him for his extensive efforts or to warrant the severe censure that members of the succeeding administration cast upon him and the Santa Rosa project. The sum that the navy department spent to purchase the land and provide for the plantation's facilities did not exceed that which the Congress authorized, and despite attempts by Jackson's officials to prove otherwise it appears that the government got a fair bargain.²⁰

Most of the land on Santa Rosa Sound that the navy department purchased belonged to Henry Marie Brackenridge, district judge, country squire, author, close friend of Joseph M. White, and a tree enthusiast in his own right. A native of Baltimore, Brackenridge had migrated westward in 1810. He flirted for a time with the Missouri fur trade, engaged briefly in law and politics in Louisiana, and returned east in 1817 in hopes of securing a diplomatic appointment. Brackenridge's knowledge of the Spanish language and law attracted the attention of Andrew Jackson, who as territorial governor of Florida employed the young lawyer in 1821 to serve as his personal secretary and translator. The governor later appointed Brackemidge *alcalde* of Pensacola and, in the following year, used his influence with President Monroe to have him named district judge of West Florida. The young judge soon acquired a country estate on Santa Rosa Sound where he could devote himself to his favorite pastime of planting trees.²¹

20. Southard to George McDuffie, January 29, 1828, in *ibid.*, III, 945. Congress approved the expenditure of \$10,000 out of existing funds for the purchase of lands and facilities. An extract of the navy appropriation bill for 1828 is included in *ibid.*, III, 945. Joseph M. White evidently suspected his transactions would come under scrutiny for he wrote Southard on August 27, 1828: "I will be much obliged to you if you will have the account settled. I do not wish to stand on the records charged with the receipt of money, the greater part of which only passed through my hands as agent for others." *Ibid.*, III, 949. White was unquestionably an authority on Spanish and French land titles, and he had once served as a United States land commissioner. See *Pensacola Gazette*, May 12, 1829.

21. A sketch of Henry Marie Brackenridge is included in the *Dictionary of*

In the course of his correspondence with Southard ironing out the purchase of his Santa Rosa holdings, Brackenridge disclosed his avocation and suggested that he be placed in charge of the plantation. His letters revealed a man of erudition and charm, devoted to the trees he had painstakingly raised to maturity on the sound and possessed of a considerable fund of knowledge about them. He made a disarming request that he be permitted to keep a small grove of orange trees, saying it would confer "a cheap happiness on a simple being, who, instead of pursuing the road of avarice or ambition, has preferred the cultivation of an innocent and elegant taste." As for his credentials to direct the plantation, Brackenridge wrote: "Although I do not pretend to be equal to Solomon, for this would be vanity and vexation of spirit, yet I may say, with truth, that there is no tree or shrub in this country whose history, properties, and habits I have not an acquaintance." He knew nothing of speculation nor had he any desire to sell his land to any individual. He wanted only the privilege of spending his life "amid the harmless creation of my own hands." Were he appointed superintendent, the judge informed Southard, the privilege itself would be "sufficient to compensate for the trouble."²²

Brackenridge had ideas of his own on developing a live oak plantation. He thought a nursery for raising the oaks from the acorns unnecessary, because there were "millions" of young trees in the area that could be transplanted. When Southard asked him to expand on the subject, Brackenridge prepared a lengthy reply which stands as one of the first serious attempts by an American to deal with the subject of forest management. In his letter, which was published in pamphlet form in Philadelphia in 1828, Brackenridge discussed the superior qualities of the live oak, the advisability and economics of raising it in managed conditions, and the proper method of caring for the tree. The display of knowledge impressed the President, as

American Biography, 22 vols. (New York, 1928-1958), II, 543-44. See also Cameron, *Governmental Forest Control*, 45-46, and Jenks Cameron, "President Adams' Acorns," *American Forests*, XXXIV (March 1828), 131-34. Brackenridge had attracted attention in 1817 by writing a pamphlet urging recognition of the struggling colonies in South America. He had recommended the adoption of a foreign policy that in many respects anticipated the Monroe Doctrine.

22. Brackenridge to Southard, March 28, May 9, 1828, in *American State Papers*, III, 920-22.

Brackenridge had probably intended. Adams discussed the letter with Southard on July 5, 1828, and agreed that the judge should superintend "the exploration" of live oaks near Pensacola and employ ten to twenty men to clear, dress, and care for them. The President insisted, however, that several hundred acres be set aside to plant acorns, explaining that he wanted the live oak to be observed growing to maturity since its "natural history . . . has many singularities."²³

Brackenridge's letter of appointment, which for some obscure reason was not dispatched until December, instructed him to begin to clear the ground, plant young trees, and select an area for an experiment on growing oaks from acorns. Within two months the judge had fifteen laborers diligently erecting facilities and clearing ground in preparation for the replanting of young live oaks. Over the course of the next several years the experiment showed encouraging progress, which the overseer faithfully charted in quarterly reports to the navy department.²⁴ Adams referred to the plantation in his last annual message in December, noting that under the act of March 3, 1827, arrangements had been made for the preservation and reproduction of live oak timber.²⁵

Unfortunately, the venture was never given a fair chance of permanent success. Even as he signed Brackenridge's appointment, Adam's days in office were numbered. The following March the uncompromising Andrew Jackson took office by virtue of his election in the bitter campaign of 1828. The new Presi-

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23. Brackenridge to Southard, March 24, 1824, in *ibid.*, III, 921. Brackenridge's letter from which the tract was drawn is dated June 1, 1828, in *ibid.*, 922-25. A comment on its significance is found in Cameron, *Governmental Forest Control*, 49-50. Adams' statement is found in his *Memoirs*, VIII, 51.
24. Brackenridge was also authorized to take all "necessary" measures to prevent fires and keep out trespassers, both deadly enemies of the live oak. He received a salary of \$400 a year and could hire an overseer at a salary of \$500 a year. Southard to Brackenridge, December 6, 1828, in *American State Papers*, III, 946. While the entire reservation consisted of 60,000 acres, the actual plantation was only about 4,000 acres, 300 of which were seeded with acorns. Brackenridge estimated that it might hold 300,000 trees. Brackenridge to Southard, June 10, 1828, in *ibid.*, III, 925. See also the quarterly reports in *ibid.*, III, 928-31. The overseer even included the precise number of trees on the reservation, arranged by categories of sizes.
25. James A. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*, 20 vols. (Washington, 1897-1917), II, 418.

dent and his followers took a dim view of the government's engaging in economic activities and were eager to uncover evidence to substantiate the charges of corruption hurled against Adams during the campaign. Before he was in office one month, Southard's successor, John Branch, ordered all operations at Pensacola suspended pending a report from an investigating team of navy commissioners on its way to Florida.²⁶

Branch was determined to extinguish the Santa Rosa experiment. The former agent to West Florida whom Southard had fired, Thomas F. Cornell, provided him with ammunition in a letter which charged, in effect, that Santa Rosa was a fraud. Nine thousand dollars of the public treasure had been spent on three "miserable and worthless" tracts of land that were not worth "nine thousand cents."²⁷ The President of the board of navy commissioners, Commodore John Rodgers, thought otherwise. Following a visit to Santa Rosa, Rodgers submitted a report to Branch that presented no evidence of fraud, but suggested in general that the project was what it had been represented to be. In his 1829 annual report, Branch ignored Santa Rosa entirely, but he did propose to substitute a marine force for the agent system to police the live oak standing on public lands, which he said was being carried off by "the unprincipled of all nations." Since Adams and Southard no longer held public office, Branch and his accomplice, Fourth Auditor Amos Kendall, could attack them only by inference. Brackenridge was not so fortunate. Branch variously threatened to suspend the project, withhold the judge's pay, cut off supporting funds, and, in an ignominious gesture, he took away Brackenridge's beloved orange trees. The judge's pathetic protests fell on deaf ears.²⁸

Santa Rosa died a lingering death. Not before August 30, 1830, did Branch finally announce a terminal date for operations, which he set for January 18, 1831. In his annual report for 1830, the secretary charged that the Adams administration had exceeded its authority by ordering trees to be planted, since the act of March 3, 1827, provided only for the preservation of

26. John Branch to Brackenridge, April 7, 1829, in *American State Papers*, III, 926. Branch was later (1843-1845) territorial governor of Florida.

27. Thomas F. Carroll [sic] to the secretary of the navy, July 16, 1829, in *ibid.*, IV, 939.

28. John Rodgers to the secretary of the navy, July 3, 1829, in *ibid.*, III, 943; Brackenridge to Branch, July 6, 1829, in *ibid.*, III, 927.

timber and not for the cultivation of trees or the purchase of lands. Branch also hinted strongly that the action had been designed to benefit certain individuals.²⁹ At the instigation of an angered Joseph White, the Congress thereupon called up the correspondence pertaining to the venture. White, meanwhile, solicited testimony from several agents who were familiar with the area, and informed an incensed John Quincy Adams of developments. The former President attributed Branch's actions to a "malicious pleasure of destroying everything of which I had planted the germ, and the base purpose of representing as wasteful prodigality the most useful and most economical expenditures." Adams concluded in his diary:

The plantation both of young trees growing when I commenced it and of those from the acorn which I had caused to be planted is now in a condition as flourishing as possible and more than a hundred thousand live oaks are growing upon it. All is to be abandoned to the stolid ignorance and stupid malignity of John Branch and his filthy subaltern, Amos Kendall.³⁰

After perusing the documents, the Congress itself was either unable to come to a decision or preferred to avoid one. It ignored entirely Branch's charges of financial malfeasance, and ended up by suggesting that the government examine the matter further. In its report the house naval affairs committee did take a decisive stand on halting the continuing plunder of the public forests by recommending an extension of the penalties provided in the act of March 1, 1817, to protect all timber on any lands acquired for naval purposes. The Congress went far beyond this recommendation, however, and passed an act forbidding the cutting of all trees on all public lands. That 1831 law and the few lands the government purchased near Pensacola are all that remain of the Santa Rosa experiment.³¹

29. Cameron, *Governmental Forest Control*, 55.

30. Adams, *Memoirs*, VIII, 322-23.

31. The supreme court upheld the application of the act to all public lands, and it remains today the basic law governing timber trespass. See Dana, *Forest and Range Policy*, 53.

The congressional action made it evident that concern for the preservation of natural forestland extended beyond a clique within the Adams administration. To still criticism that he had abandoned measures to protect the woodlands, Branch labored energetically in the early months of 1831 to perfect his marine agent plan, which envisaged naval patrols along coasts and rivers adjacent to government preserves. He had little time, however, for in May of that year Levi Woodbury replaced him as chief of the navy department. The new secretary was inclined to proceed more cautiously in matters. Sensing this, White and Brackenridge renewed their efforts to salvage the live oak, focusing their attack on Branch's marine agent scheme, which White characterized as a "pretence" to save the tree and an extravagant and useless endeavor.³²

The congressional investigation had given Santa Rosa a new lease on life. Working now without pay, Brackenridge continued to supervise the care of the thousands of young live oaks flourishing on the plantation. He outlined for Woodbury, as he had for Southard three years earlier, the advantages of cultivating the trees.³³ Brackenridge and White made their point. Woodbury discontinued the marine agent patrols and promised a more efficient protective system. On the other hand he also indicated that he would not expand the Santa Rosa venture, despite the favorable recommendation of General John Clark, whom Woodbury had sent to West Florida on yet another investigative mission. Clark had advised that the experiment be continued.³⁴

John Branch returned to the Congress where he and White continued to snipe at each other, but Brackenridge quit the battle when his term as district judge expired in January 1832. He left Florida an embittered man and retired to his family home in Pennsylvania. Woodbury turned the plantation over to the commander of the navy yard with orders simply to preserve what the judge had started. No more live oaks were planted, and the experiment languished.³⁵

John Quincy Adams never abandoned his plants. To the close

32. White to Levi Woodbury, October 23, November 4, 1831, in *American State Papers*, IV, 112, 118.

33. Brackenridge to Woodbury, July 27, 1831, *ibid.*, IV, 119.

34. John Clark to Woodbury, December 4, 1831, in *ibid.*, IV, 107-08.

35. Jenks Cameron, "Who Killed Santa Rosa?" *American Forests*, XXXIV (May 1928), 263-66.

of his days he faithfully recorded their progress with ever more feeble strokes of his pen. In the years that remained to him he poured his eloquence and energy into other causes and left his dreams of forests unspoken. Mention of the live oak disappeared from the diary and from his letters. The boxes of shrubs and plants and acorns quit coming to his door. But the commitment he had made to himself and to nature Adams did not forget. In the loneliness of his nursery the illustrious gardener continued to keep his own silent faith with his plants and trees.³⁶

36. The "Garden Book" of John Quincy Adams in the Adams Papers testifies to his continuing interest in his plants.