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Andrew Dias Poppell, 1894-1955: A Taylor County Entrepreneur

by MARGARET N. BURKLEY

During the first half of the 20th century, forest products and livestock were major parts of the Florida economy. Large lumber and naval stores firms were extracting huge amounts of yellow pine lumber and turpentine from Florida's extensive forests and cattle barons were marketing cattle which they had grown on wide expanses of open range. That Florida was the leading producer of naval stores by the early 20th century is also comparatively well-known.¹ Much less has been written about the small businessmen who played important roles in the development of diversified local economies by investing in and operating naval stores, lumbering, and ranching operations. In the naval stores industry, for example, they owned or leased the right to farm oleoresin, hired and supervised the crews of turpentiners, ran commissaries to supply the crews' daily needs, and built and operated camps to house them. Although they operated on a much smaller scale than did the Putnam Lumber Company and other such firms, they were versatile businessmen who were willing to take risks and act upon opportunities as they arose. Typical of those entrepreneurs was Andrew Dias Poppell of Taylor County.²

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1. Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables, 1971), 165; Robert Shelley Blount III, "Spirits in the Pines," (M.A. Thesis, Florida State University, 1992), 63.
2. Clifton Paisley, "Wade Leonard, Florida Naval Stores Operator," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 52 (April 1973), 381-400; A Stuart Campbell, *The Naval Stores Industry* (Gainesville, 1934). For background information on naval stores production in Florida and the South, see Edward Ayers, *Promise of the New South* (New York, 1992), Mark V. Wetherington, *The New South Comes to Wiregrass Georgia, 1860-1906* (Knoxville, 1994), Robert Shelley Blount III, "Spirits in the Pines," (M.A. Thesis, Florida State University, 1992), Edward Kenneth Kemp, Jr., "Naval Stores— A Declining Industry?" (M.A. Thesis, Florida State University, 1968), and Robert Lauriault, "From Can't to Can't: The North Florida Turpentine Camp, 1900-1950," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 67 (January 1989), 310-328.

Andrew Poppell was one of several Taylor County businessmen who engaged in a variety of activities as he put to use the lands he owned or leased. He grazed his free-ranging cattle and hogs on the lands that sustained his turpentine and lumbering operations. Over time, however, he concentrated his energies on the production of naval stores. Taylor County was well-suited to such activities. Created in 1856 along the Gulf coast about 50 miles east of Tallahassee in Florida's "big bend," Taylor County was literally covered with longleaf yellow pine and other valuable timber. Despite extensive logging operations in the early 20th century, virgin timber still abounded in the 1920s. Both naval stores and lumbering remained major industries in the county through the mid-20th century. Cattle grazing also remained important. In varying degrees, Poppell was active in all three of these.³

Andrew Poppell was born in 1894, the third of three children of Wiley and Maggie Blue Poppell. His father reputedly owned the largest herd of "range cattle" in the county, running over 4,000 head in an area that stretched from the Gulf coast north across the Fenholloway River to present-day State Highway 98 and westward to the Aucilla River. Although some farmers and ranchers fenced in their livestock, many others permitted their animals to roam at will until Florida enacted a fence law in 1950. Taylor County was no exception, and neither were Wiley and Andrew Poppell. Their cattle and large herds of hogs ranged freely throughout much of the western part of the county.⁴

Little is known about Andrew Poppell's life until he was drafted into the U.S. Army in February, 1918. He was then 23 years old and was working as a commissary clerk. With hazel eyes, black hair, and a ruddy complexion, he stood five feet six inches tall at the time of his induction. He was equipped with some education, the extent of which is not known. Promoted to sergeant during his brief military service, he was honorably discharged in December, 1918. In 1925, pursuant to the World War Adjusted Compensation

3. Burl Richard (Little Burl) Poppell Interview, October 13, 1994, transcript in author's possession. Hereinafter Poppell Interview A.

4. *They Were Here*, Vol. 1 (Perry: Taylor County Historical Society, n. d.) See also Poppell Interview A; and Joe A. Akerman, Jr., *Florida Cowman: A History of Florida Cattle Raising* (Kissimmee, 1976), 253.

Act, he received the sum of \$663 in additional payment for his service.⁵

Andrew Poppell ran cattle and hogs on the open range, sometimes independently and sometimes in partnership with his father. His recording of both a hog ear mark and a cattle brand in 1911 indicate that he had acquired some livestock while still a teenager. In addition to their own individual cattle brands, the father and son recorded three hog ear marks in partnership in 1942.⁶

From 1921 until 1946, Poppell bought and sold—outright or in shares—numerous head of hogs and cattle. For example, in 1921, he bought a half interest in 150 head of hogs owned by his kinsman, J. B. Poppell. In 1927, he paid \$10,000 for an unspecified number of cattle from his father. In 1938, he sold his father a one-quarter interest in all his cattle bearing the brand N that were grazing in western Taylor County. In 1940, he and his father bought 50 head of cattle and 700 hogs from R. H. Woods. According to the bills of sale on and off the public record, the parties who entered into the transactions were relatives. The Poppell family had settled in Taylor County in the 1850s and over the years married into similarly large families. Many of Andrew Poppell's deals may well have been designed to keep property or profit within this extended family. A considerable number of his stock transactions were not recorded, suggesting that he and other stockmen made agreements based on the integrity of the parties involved. They were content if a handwritten note, or even a handshake, sealed a deal.⁷

Andrew Poppell acquired land by a variety of methods, but especially through leasing or outright purchases. In 1929, he purchased approximately 2,388 acres from the Marinette Investment Company, Incorporated, for an undisclosed amount. In 1936, he bought a half section (320 acres) from Consolidated Naval Stores Company of Savannah, Georgia, and Jacksonville, Florida; in 1941, he bought three sections from the same company. Many of the war-

5. Andrew Dias Poppell Papers, M74-4, Florida State Archives, (hereinafter Poppell Papers); Taylor County, Soldiers and Sailors, 36. This document and all other Taylor County material cited herein are located in the Taylor County Courthouse, Perry, Florida. Burl Richard "Little Burl" Poppell interview, November 2, 1994, transcript in author's possession (hereinafter Poppell interview B).

6. Taylor County, Marks and Brands, 42-43.

7. Taylor County, Bills of Sale, Vol. A, 456, Vol. B, 323, Vol. C, 143; Poppell Papers, Folder 8.

ranty deeds and other documents on record, including livestock transactions, bear no indication they were prepared by an attorney, again suggesting that informal business arrangements were commonplace.⁸

Periodically, Poppell purchased tax certificates for land owned by people who had failed to pay county *ad valorem* taxes. However, with one exception there is no record that Poppell eventually gained possession of the land described in the certificates. And that might not have been his goal. He may have purchased the certificates speculatively, knowing that eventually he would gain back his original investment plus interest. The sole exception was a four acre lot. Poppell acquired this certificate on behalf of the "Poppell Corporation" in 1942, and he eventually acquired legal title to that parcel. When he died in 1955, Andrew Poppell owned over 5,500 acres of real estate in Taylor County, the assessed value of which was then \$38,708.⁹

Like other men whose cattle and hogs ranged freely, Poppell had to cope with the loss of his livestock to thieves. During the 1920s and 1930s rustlers operated continually in Taylor County. In 1939, two of Poppell's relatives were listed among the defendants in several cases tried for "larceny of cows." But his kinsmen were fortunate; not all the thieves who were caught received due legal process. Sometimes, irate cowmen shot and killed the individuals they caught or sometimes merely blamed for stealing their cattle. Habitually, when owners and their men rounded up the animals, they carried guns for protection from the hogs, the cows— and from one another. During this era, many men in Taylor County carried guns; in the early 1920s, at only a few meetings did the Taylor County Commission fail to authorize at least one citizen to carry a firearm. On February 25, 1923, the commission authorized Poppell to carry his own weapon, a .38 caliber Smith & Wesson pistol.¹⁰

Andrew Poppell experienced considerable difficulty in 1925 as a result of the local citizens' frontier-like propensity for meting out summary justice. In early June, C. E. Fulford approached Poppell at his commissary store and accused him of publicly voicing his

8. Poppell Papers, Folders 1 and 3.

9. *Ibid.*, Folder 5 (b); Taylor County, Administration, Vol. 7, 494-95.

10. Taylor County, Criminal Court Docket, Vol. H, 26-35, 47, 57; Poppell Interview A; Jack D. Woods Interview, November 2, 1994, transcript in author's possession; Taylor County, Commission Minutes, Vol. 7, 187-90; Stetson Kennedy, *Palmetto County* (New York, 1942), 222-24.



Andrew Dias Poppell, 1894-1955, (center) and family members. Photograph courtesy of Taylor County Historical Society, Perry, Florida.

name in connection with cattle rustling. Poppell denied this accusation, and words led to blows. Both men were armed. As the two men struggled, Poppell's gun discharged and wounded Fulford, who died a short time later. The case went to a grand jury, which could find no true bill. There was insufficient evidence to place Poppell on trial for committing murder, and, after he paid court costs of \$10.37, he was released from custody. He returned to his home and his various business pursuits.¹¹

Despite his extensive livestock business, surviving documents suggest that Andrew Poppell paid more attention to his lumbering interests than he did to cattle and hogs. Lumber was considerably more important to the county's economy than was cattle grazing, and by 1920, large corporations such as Brooks-Scanlon Corporation, the Wilson Lumber Company of Florida, and the Burton-Swartz Cypress company were active in the county. These corporations harvested their own timberlands, leased out their lands to independent operators who then supplied them with logs, or processed logs sold to them by still other independents.¹²

Andrew Poppell cut the trees on his own land, and also obtained the "wood rights" on land he leased for that purpose. His turpentiners farmed the pine trees for three or four years, and then his lumbermen moved in, cut down the trees, and shipped them out. Most of Poppell's operations were located between the Econfina and Fenholloway Rivers, in the vicinity of State Highway 98. In 1934, he leased a large tract from the Burton-Swartz Cypress Company of Florida at a cost of 40 cents for each cord of wood he removed. The same year, he obtained the rights to all the pine timber on about 2,700 acres of land owned by the Brooks-Scanlon Corporation. From 1934 to 1939, Poppell made several similar transactions.¹³

As Poppell's land holdings increased, so did his timber resources, and in 1932 he and W. W. Whidden formed the Econfina Land & Timber Company and incorporated it under the laws of the state of Florida with a capital stock of \$5,000 dollars. Poppell was listed as owner of the corporation; apparently, he was both its

11. Poppell Papers, Folder 21; Taylor County, Circuit Court Minutes, Vol. 9, 120, and Sheriffs Criminal Docket, Vol. B, 375.

12. Blount, "Spirits," 119; Lenthall Wyman, *Florida Naval Stores*, Florida Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 25 (Tallahassee, 1929), 5, 42; Poppell Interview A; Campbell, *Naval Stores Industry*.

13. Poppell Papers, Folders 10, 17.

president and its majority stockholder. Small crews cut the timber. In 1941, he contracted with Ralph Pinkerton and Cecil Shealy to cut lumber for him. The same year, he also contracted with the company of Tuten & Walker for the same purpose. Although most of the men who cut lumber in Taylor County were white, some of the sawyers and scalers were African-Americans. These firms and individuals loaded and trucked all the rough, green pine they cut to the Wilson Lumber Company in Perry. There, Wilson employees kiln dried the lumber and dressed it in 2" x6" or 2" x4" sizes suitable for building. Typical of the charges for this service was a bill for \$189.40 paid by Poppell. This sum included the kiln drying and dressing of 1,894 ten foot lengths of 2" x6", a charge of ten cents per running foot.¹⁴

Judging by the tally sheets that have survived, Poppell was cutting mostly pine, which ranged in length from as little as ten feet to as much as 45 feet. Occasionally, logs were even longer, but most of them fell within a 20-30 foot range. For pine, the Wilson Lumber Company specified that logs must be 10 inches or larger in diameter and from 10 feet to 18 feet inclusive in length, "of which 60% must be in 14, 16, & 18' lengths; boxed timber [is] to be free of all metal." In other words, if the trees were farmed for turpentine, the nails that held the boxes (also called cups) that collected the gum, as well as the boxes themselves, must be removed from the logs before they were trucked to the mills. It is unclear whether each tally sheet dealt with an individual truckload. In the early 1920s, when trucks were smaller and less powerful and roads less adequate, tally sheets offered "plenty of room" for each load. After 1950, the average truck held more logs than could be listed on one of the standard tally sheets.¹⁵

Like his peers, Poppell engaged in "clear cutting," taking as much of the mature timber as he could. And, also like most of his peers, he made no effort to reforest the cut-over areas. "Little Burl" Poppell, Andrew's cousin and for a time also his employee, recalls that the first replanting of pine he ever saw was in the early 1930s when he drove his Model T Ford to Port St. Joe and saw St. Joe Paper Company employees replanting some acreage that had been

14. Telephone Interview, October 13, 1994, Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations; Poppell Collection, Taylor County Historical Society; Poppell Papers, Folder 15.

15. Poppell Papers, Folders 14, 15; Poppell Interview A.

cut. But the practice was still in its infancy, and he does not recall seeing reforestation in Taylor County during Andrew Poppell's lifetime.¹⁶

The industry in which Andrew Poppell personally was most involved was naval stores, and it was in this sphere that he obtained a state and county occupational license. The industry was named during the era of sail, when ships required large supplies of pitch, tar, resin, and turpentine, all of which were derived from the oleoresin produced by longleaf and slash pine trees. Gradually, the industry evolved a system whereby the producers of oleoresin sold their products to commission merchants such as the Consolidated Naval Stores Company or Turpentine & Rosin Factors, Incorporated, of Jacksonville, Florida. Commission merchants were middlemen, the descendants of the factorage houses that existed in colonial America, and traditionally their employees—known as factors or agents—handled the marketing aspect of the naval stores industry. And they were kept busy. By 1929, Florida was producing one quarter of the world's supply of turpentine.¹⁷

Andrew Poppell's turpentine operations were headquartered at Waylonzo, a small rural community in the vicinity of Oakland Church. The church was and still is located west of Perry, along an unpaved road that runs from State Highway 98 to the Cabbage Grove fire tower. Throughout most of his adult life, Poppell resided in Perry, commuting to Waylonzo and elsewhere to supervise his naval stores, lumber, and livestock operations.

His camp was similar to other turpentine camps of the day: a collection of wooden buildings, consisting of "a still, a commissary, a blacksmith and cooperage shed, gluing shed, [and] cup cleaning vat . . ." as well as "quarters" in which the workers lived. The quarters that Poppell provided for his men probably were single family cabins, because, unlike some turpentine operators, he allowed his workers to move their families into the camp. Because a sufficient number of children lived at Waylonzo and its environs, the county

16. *Ibid.* Despite "Little Burl" Poppell's recollections, millions of pine seedlings were planted on both public and private land in north Florida by Civilian Conservation Corps crews during the 1930s. See Jerrell H. Shofner, "Roosevelt's Tree Army: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 65 (April 1987), 439-440.

17. Blount, "Spirits," 78-81.

school board established a school in the vicinity of Oakland Church.¹⁸

Most of Poppell's employees were African-American males who lived in Taylor County, and at least one of his foremen was African-American. Several of the men came from Lamont, a village in neighboring Jefferson County. But whether or not the men were Taylor County residents, most of them brought their families to Waylonzo. All the men worked the customary six days a week, but the unaccompanied males then left camp and spent Saturday evenings and Sundays at their own homes. They traveled there in their own cars, but if they lacked transportation, Poppell provided it for them.¹⁹

Andrew Poppell's turpentiners performed well-defined tasks. The "cuppers" installed the metal or clay cups in which the resin, or gum, was collected. The "chippers" placed the "streaks" or cuts in the trees, just under the bark layer, from which the gum would seep down into the cups. The "dippers" patrolled the trees and periodically emptied the gum from the cups into the buckets they carried, transferred it to barrels, and finally delivered it to the still for distillation. The work was hard, poorly paid, and menial, but the experienced hands were skilled at their jobs. The amount of gum the trees produced varied considerably. Some slash pines had to be "dipped" every two weeks, others every three or four weeks. "The [dippers] just knew when it was ready . . . and they went out to the trees and dipped [the gum]. How they knew when the boxes would get full I don't know, but they usually knew," reminisced "Little Burl" Poppell. At the camp, other workers processed the gum through the distilling apparatus and prepared it for shipment.²⁰

Around 1940, Poppell ceased distilling his own gum. Instead, under the aegis of Turpentine & Rosin Factors, Incorporated, he began delivering it to the Naval Stores Division of the Glidden Company in Valdosta, Georgia, for processing. The prices he received for his gum varied depending on the grade of the product, which depended in turn on color. The lighter the gum's color, the better its quality. For example, in May, 1940, for Gum Grade K, Poppell received three different prices: \$1.89, \$1.76, or \$1.67 a bar-

18. Wyman, *Florida Naval Stores*, 9; Poppell Interviews A and B.

19. Poppell Interviews, A and B.

20. Wyman, *Florida Naval Stores*, 18-19; Poppell Interview A, Paisley, "Wade Leonard," 386-88; Campbell, *Naval Stores Industry*, 31.

rel. However, after June 1, 1940, oleoresin prices increased sharply. In July, 1940, Poppell received \$7.49 per barrel, and no differentiation between sub-grades of gum appears on the records. World War II was responsible for this price increase. Throughout the war years, 1940 through 1945, increased demand drove the price for crude pine gum steadily upwards to a peak in 1946 of \$30.80 per barrel, after which it gradually declined again.²¹

Like other turpentine operators, Andrew Poppell relied on his factors to handle most of his business affairs. When he received payment for his products, which eventually included not only naval stores but timber, the factors handled the transaction. Poppell established a line of credit with Turpentine & Rosin Factors, Incorporated. Seasonally, he estimated his anticipated expenses and obtained loans from the factors to cover them. In 1940, his estimate for his winter expenses fell short of the costs he actually incurred. Turpentine & Rosin Factors carried his debt until he could clear it.²²

Turpentine & Rosin Factors maintained three accounts for Poppell: a basic general account, a "special" account, and a timber account. At times, Poppell owed the firm a considerable amount; throughout 1940, for example, his general account had a debit balance in excess of \$20,000. Most of the documents related to these accounts are monthly statements, hence there is a paucity of detail included within them. But it is clear that Poppell not only sold his products, but also bought most of the supplies for his commissary store from this Jacksonville firm, which had a branch office and a grocery warehouse in Valdosta, Georgia.²³

If Andrew Poppell, like other operators, furnished commissary supplies to his workers at inflated prices, the record is silent. But he sold his men a variety of items, from cans of tomatoes to bottles of aspirin. Some of the items, in the light of subsequent inflation, attract momentary attention: blue jeans cost Poppell less than a dollar a pair, and he paid only 18-1/2 cents per gallon for his bulk purchases of gasoline. He stocked dairy feed, suggesting that a few cows were kept at the camp to supply milk for the workers and their families. He kept supplies of hay and oats on hand, presumably for draft animals as well as the horses ridden by him and his employ-

21. Kemp, "Naval Stores," 45, 74; Poppell Papers, Folder 16 (c).

22. Poppell Papers, Folder 16 (a).

23. *Ibid.*, Folder 16 (b).

ees. And each order shipped to the store contained tobacco and cigarettes, including at least two cartons of Camels, which cost Poppell \$1.31 per carton. Unfortunately, there is no remaining record of the prices he charged his workers for these goods.²⁴

Poppell did not obtain all of his supplies from Valdosta. Some he bought in Perry, usually because he needed them quickly: tires, automobile parts, boots, and other items of clothing. It is not clear which of his expenses were business related and which were personal.²⁵

By 1929, Poppell's turpentine operation apparently had become so large that he could no longer run it single-handedly. Consequently, he informally divided at least some of his land holdings into sections and hired other operators and their crews to farm those sections for him. He prepared documents printed with survey grids the size of a township, upon which he marked his holdings. He then evaluated the status of the timber on this land and estimated the number of turpentine cups likely to be used on the trees. In November, 1929, W. W. McWhidden, who may have been the "W. W. Whidden" who became Poppell's partner in the Econfina Land & Timber Company, was handling the trees on one of Poppell's sections. Poppell noted that the "pine is good grade, cypress is good grade, young pine coming about 4 and 5 years old in [3-4] years will double the number of cups on [the] land," and figured that he could get 210,000 feet of pine, 80,000 feet of cypress, 3,050 oak ties, and 90,000 feet of sweet gum off this property after he obtained the gum from an estimated 11,600 turpentine cups. The record contains numerous less-detailed estimates which relate to his other land holdings and bear the names of several men who farmed the oleoresin for him.²⁶

Besides his arrangement with Turpentine & Rosin Factors, Incorporated, Poppell financed his business operations in several other ways. From 1936 to 1940, he executed promissory notes for loans he obtained from the Perry Banking Company. He also raised money by mortgaging both the livestock and the land that he owned. And occasionally he borrowed from his father or other family members. He also financed other people, apparently serving as a source of credit for relatives or individuals in his employ.

24. *Ibid.*, Folder 16 (d).

25. *Ibid.*, Folder 11.

26. *Ibid.*, Folder 17.

For example, he co-signed a note for W. J. Blue, one of his relatives, when Blue borrowed \$101.75 from the Perry Banking Company to make a partial payment for a truck.²⁷

Andrew Poppell and his father gradually moved out of the cattle and hog raising industries. Taylor County implemented a tick eradication program in 1920, three years before the Florida legislature introduced a compulsory state-wide program that required the frequent dipping of cattle in an arsenic solution. At the same time, hog owners began regularly vaccinating their stock to guard against frequent outbreaks of hog cholera. Unfortunately, Florida's 1923 program did not bring an end to tick fever. When it broke out again in 1936, researchers discovered it was not Texas tick fever, but a tropical tick fever that affected Florida's deer as well as its cattle. The state was compelled to eradicate the deer and cattle in the infected areas in order to end the cycle. This process was expensive, costing Florida's taxpayers \$3,000,000 by 1939. Although they were paid three cents a head for each steer that was dipped, for some ranchers and farmers the price was becoming prohibitive. When Florida enacted its so-called "fence law" in 1949, for Wiley and Andrew Poppell the price became too high; they sold their remaining herds, and Wiley joined Andrew Poppell in his turpentine operation.²⁸

Despite his extensive business interests, Poppell still had time to participate in some of the political activities in his country. From 1920 onward, he periodically fulfilled his civic duty as a potential juror, and he frequently acted as a clerk or manager for his precinct in local, state, and national elections. In November, 1930, he was elected to the first of three terms as county commissioner. He left office at the end of 1936.²⁹

As a county commissioner during the Great Depression, Poppell supported President Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" programs. One of the most comprehensive programs came from the Works Project Administration (WPA) in 1935. With a view to creating jobs in Taylor County, particularly for unemployed women, the WPA proposed setting up a canning plant, a garment-making work

27. *Ibid.*, Folder 4; Taylor County, Mortgages, *passim*, Bills of Sale, *passim*, Poppell Papers, Folders 9 and 13.

28. *They Were Here*, Vol. 1; Akerman, *Florida Cowman*, 253; Kennedy, *Palmetto County* 225-26.

29. Taylor County, Commission Minutes, Vol. 6-10, *passim*.

center, and a repair shop. Poppell and his colleagues agreed to that project and also supported the establishment of a county health unit later that year.³⁰

Andrew Poppell continued to serve his community after he left elected office. In 1936, Governor David Sholtz appointed him as cattle and hog inspector for Taylor County's Fifth Cattle District. His participation in public affairs apparently ended later that year.³¹

The years Poppell spent as a public official were perhaps more commendable than they might appear, because he was not a widely popular man. "He was liked in places, but disliked in other places," especially "places" where C. E. Fulford's death was still remembered. Poppell's situation was not an enviable one. For many years, he genuinely feared someone might try to kill him, either in revenge for Fulford's death or because of his attitude toward his county's major industries.³²

Although he was involved in Taylor County's three major industries, Poppell's attitude toward them was unacceptable to many people in his community. Local cattlemen, especially during the winter and spring calving season, generally carried out "cattle burns": they set fire to the underbrush and rotting logs in the pine forests in order to clear the ground and stimulate the growth of grass. Poppell neither followed nor condoned this practice. He wanted the cattlemen to stop burning the undergrowth, because he believed fire hindered the growth of the pine trees. Immature trees, he suggested, should be permitted to reach maturity.³³

Apparently, the cattlemen and Poppell all were correct. According to Stetson Kennedy, scientific studies made around 1940 proved that cattle allowed to graze on rich young grasses gained over 40 percent more weight than cattle gained on unburned land. But studies also showed that "fires often stunt[ed] the growth of trees as much as ten years . . ." But when Poppell tried to persuade other cattlemen to adopt a more conservative approach to Taylor County's timberland, he made enemies. And a few of those enemies paid little heed to the law. On at least one occasion, someone

30. *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, 160, 196.

31. *Ibid.*, 253-255.

32. Poppell Interviews A and B; Woods Interview.

33. Kennedy, *Palmetto County*, 227; Poppell Interview B; Woods Interview.

tried to ambush Poppell, succeeding only in riddling his pickup truck with bullet-holes.³⁴

The lumbermen were displeased when Poppell criticized them for the extent to which they clear-cut the timber; he wanted them to be more selective and, again, he wanted the young trees to have an opportunity to mature. Before his lumber crews cut the pine trees, Poppell's turpentiners first farmed them for oleoresin for three or four years. Therefore, it is likely that Poppell's viewpoint was more realistic than altruistic. As a lumberman, he knew that timber was being cut at an alarming rate; and as a turpentine operator he wanted the pine trees to reach maturity so he and other operators could farm the oleoresin from them for a few years before they were cut.³⁵

Poppell evolved and maintained his views during an era that was in fact a transition period for the livestock and timber industries. Not only was the state demanding that cattlemen confine their burning to their own land, but tick fever and, later, fence laws were inhibiting and regulating the cattle industry. Reforestation practices were still in their infancy, and the lumbermen were literally cutting themselves out of business. The men who made money in cattle and lumber were often less pragmatic than Poppell and so, when he differed with them, he had to pay a price for doing so. That price was the constant threat of physical violence. His concern was justified. On one occasion, he was threatened by a group of men who used their automobile to block Cabbage Grove Road (State Highway 98) and prevent his passage. Only when the men discerned that a young boy accompanied Poppell did they move their vehicle and allow him to pass.

Few of Andrew Poppell's documents from the 1940s and early 1950s have survived. Therefore, it is impossible to tell when, or even if, he eventually gave up his business interests and retired. When he died in 1955, Poppell was 60 years old. To settle his estate, his widow sold his land and other property, including some cattle and hogs and a fish camp located near the mouth of the Econfina River.³⁶

34. Woods Interview, Kennedy, *Palmetto County*, 227; Campbell, *Naval Stores Industry*, 31-32.

35. Woods Interview; Poppell Papers, Folder 17.

36. Taylor County, Administration, Vol. 6, 251, Vol. 7, 426-28, 462, 493-96.

Even before Poppell's demise, the turpentine and lumber industries in Taylor County were being replaced by the pulpwood industry, which is now dominated by Buckeye Florida, Incorporated. Cattle still graze the county grasslands, but they are confined within fences; and forests of planted pines, closely regimented, cover much of the county's landscape as they await the arrival of the lumbermen and their saws. One finds little tangible evidence of Poppell's entrepreneurial activities; his turpentine camp, commissary store, workers' cabins, and other buildings at Waylonzo have been engulfed by trees, vines, and undergrowth.

But in their time, Andrew Poppell and his fellow entrepreneurs filled an important niche in Taylor County's economy. They were not wealthy magnates, but they had sufficient money to invest in the developing forest products industry at the local level. They not only offered employment to the turpentiners and other workers in their communities, but they also provided the raw products that enabled the large dealers and the commission merchants to prosper. Andrew Poppell, through his diverse activities in the cattle, lumber, and naval stores industries, contributed much to the economic well-being of his community. In the company of countless other small businessmen of his day, he contributed to the prosperity of his state.