

## Seeing Is Believing: An Early Southern Pine Demonstration Plot In Northern Louisiana

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[Figure 1] By the late 1920s, most of the big southern pine lumber operations had cut out their virgin timber, or were on the cusp of doing so. Only a few had started dabbling with sustainable forestry—“perpetual forestry,” as some called it. This USDA Forest Service image, taken in January 1926 by Wilbur R. Mattoon, captures the essence of the limited southern pine silvicultural options available at that time. The H. Flood Madison Plot Number 5 in northern Morehouse Parish, Louisiana, had been cut the year before by the Crossett Lumber Company, which left two pine trees per acre to produce seed—the company’s standard plan for regeneration for at least a decade. Although less visible in this image, a strong message of fire control was also touted to help reseed these cutover lands. This photo also demonstrates some of the challenges to implementing this prescription—inconsistent quality of the residual seed trees (particularly when young and of limited crown development) and the retention of non-merchantable hardwoods sometimes led to inadequate restocking.



Figure 1. Photograph taken by Wilburn R. Mattoon; image number 206382 in USDA Forest Service archives.

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[Figure 2] This image, taken by a different Forest Service photographer 15 years after Plot Number 5 had been cut, clearly demonstrated the promise of southern pine silviculture. Even though Mattoon's original picture showed little in terms of potential pine recruitment, the loblolly and shortleaf pines native to northern Louisiana were prolific seed producers when seed trees were retained. While the emergent oak in the background of this picture (labeled #20 in Mattoon's 1926 image) remained, hardwoods had not dominated this site following harvest, allowing for natural pine regeneration to fully stock the new stand. The establishment of a series of these forestry demonstration plots with large interpretative signs across much of the southeastern United States by timber companies and the USDA Forest Service spread the word of sustainable forestry to landowners of all sizes in a fashion that they could see—and believe.

Both photographs are public-domain images courtesy of the USDA Forest Service.



**Figure 2.** Photograph taken in 1941 by an unknown Forest Service photographer, currently held in the archives of the Crossett Experimental Forest (Crossett, Arkansas).