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Pete A.Y. Gunter

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## R.E. JACKSON AND THE EARLY BIG THICKET CONSERVATION MOVEMENT, 1929-1957

*by Pete A.Y. Gunter*

The present essay concentrates on the life and work of Richard Elmer Jackson, the man who more than anyone else laid the foundations for more recent efforts to preserve the Big Thicket from the brush hog and the power saw: efforts which, after some successes, continue.

Jackson was not alone. By concentrating on his work one ignores the efforts of others, many of whom worked alongside him: Lancelot Rosier, Bess (Mrs. Bruce) Reid, Ray Gill, P.A. Winkler, Larry Jean Fisher, Donald O. Baird, H.B. Parks, Walter P. Taylor, and V.L. Cory. Many others could, and should be noted, and their work examined. Here, however, Jackson holds center stage.

One more prior comment should be made. This essay is an attempt to explore the early Big Thicket conservation movement. But it is based on only two sources: the papers and correspondence of R.E. Jackson and a file of newspaper clippings. This is a good starting-point. Although the results correct some errors and misunderstandings and help us understand factors which previously were unknown, the base is not sufficient to the task. Further research needs to be done, and one hopes it will be possible to encourage some (possibly young) historian to take up the task. This would involve going through materials in the papers of Senators Morris Sheppard and Ralph Yarborough, of the Kirby Lumber Company, of Governor James V. Allred, and of Congressman Martin Dies. It would involve research in the "morgue" files of area newspapers and the attempt to find Big Thicket materials in the correspondence of those who worked for its conservation. With this much said – that the present essay is incomplete – one can begin.

R.E. Jackson was born August 12, 1880, in Leary, Georgia, and came with his parents in 1886 to Jasper, Texas, where the family established a general store. He was said to be a kinsman, or descendent, of General Stone-wall Jackson. As a youth he worked in the family store and carried mail horseback from Jasper to Woodville. In 1896, age sixteen, he became the first ticket agent of the G.B.K.F.C. Railroad in Silsbee. By 1904 he was a conductor for the Santa Fe Railroad, a position which he retained until his retirement in 1945. In 1906, he married Velma Ophelia Byrum of Gainesville, Texas. They had three children, Richard E. Jackson, Sarah Elizabeth Jackson, and Nina V. Jackson. He died April 26, 1957.

Even a brief glimpse at Jackson's life reveals a man of great energy. While working full time as a conductor, he became involved at different times in owning a drug store, a grocery store, and a filling station. He also was involved in local real estate ventures. Letters in his files attest to the part he played in procuring and developing the Santa Fe baseball park in Silsbee. He organized

and managed Silsbee's first baseball team and was president of the Sabine-Neches Amateur Baseball League. Deacon of the Central Baptist Church in Silsbee, he and Mrs. Jackson taught Sunday School there. He served as chairman of the building committee when a new church was constructed.<sup>1</sup> How he managed to find endless hours to lavish on the Big Thicket in the midst of so many obligations is an interesting question. Somehow, he managed.

The date at which Jackson founded the Big Thicket Association of East Texas traditionally has been given as 1927. Clearly, this is not true. Jackson himself stated in 1951:

In 1929 there was an idea born in the mind of myself on a camp hunt, up in the "Thicket" about 4:30 in the morning, when most of this came to me and there was plenty of game there then, caused by a game warden and a companion of mine, arguing about the depletion of our natural things in that area, which at that time seemed inexhaustible.

Jackson dated the actual founding of the East Texas Big Thicket Association as 1933, in the rooms of the Chamber of Commerce in Beaumont, Texas.

A document from Jackson's files titled "Minutes of Meeting Called for the Purpose of Organizing in the Interests of the Big Thicket," however, is dated May 7, 1936. It describes a meeting at the office of the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce attended by Dr. Joe Record, M.L. Yount, Henry W. Flagg, William J. Tucker, Roy L. Brittain, Dr. Walter P. Taylor, J.F. Combs, Ray Gill, and P.F. Lawson.<sup>3</sup> R.E. Jackson was unanimously elected president of the new organization and Ray Gill secretary-treasurer. Tentative vice presidents for Tyler, Polk, Harris, Jefferson, Liberty, Orange, Jasper, and Chambers counties were proposed. M.L. Yount was elected vice president for Hardin County. William J. Tucker, executive secretary of the Texas Game, Fish, and Oyster Commission, spoke to the gathering, urging that though standards for national park status were too rigid to include the Big Thicket, it might qualify as a national forest, migratory bird refuge, or a game preserve.

It is not clear how the year 1927 became fixed in the minds of conservationists (including myself), as the beginning of efforts to protect the area. My suggestion is that Jackson's hunting lease, which predated 1936, is in part the cause of the confusion. Inaccurate newspaper reports may also account for the error. Records in Jackson's correspondence date the beginning of this lease in January 1934. It was to last for five years but was renewed several times under the title "Hardin County Cooperative Pasture and Game Preserve" or "Hardin County Game Preserve." An undated document from Southwestern Lumber Company of New Jersey and Kirby Lumber Company (of Houston), describes the lease as consisting of fifteen tracts of land totaling 6087.1 acres – a sizable area.<sup>4</sup> This seems to be only a part of Jackson's lease, however, since both James A. Cozine, in his dissertation on Big Thicket conservation, and George B. Hardy, in a biography of Jackson, use an 18,000-acre figure. Jackson, in a letter dated February 14, 1936, to the state Game, Fish, and Oyster Commission, also uses the figure of 18,000 acres. The extent of the lease probably varied; a *Houston Chronicle* article from the 1950s reports the lease as consist-

claims 30,000 acres. A letter dated November 5, 1942, claims 50,000.

Clearly, though Jackson's lease formed the basis for a hunting club, he conceived it primarily as a conservationist organization. Game laws were not enforced in many areas of the Thicket until the 1960s. Jackson, however, was able to find a game warden for the lease and to stock game species there.<sup>5</sup> The "Hardin County Cooperative Pasture and Game Preserve," situated at the junction of northern Hardin and southern Polk counties, was considered by him to be the nucleus of both an environmental movement and a much larger park or nature sanctuary to be created by the movement. This can be seen in the overlap of the early members in the game preserve and the participants in the founding of the East Texas Big Thicket Association. Of the ten founding members of the association, five were already members of the hunting group, which also included the kinds of well-situated people to whom Jackson often appealed for support and for the prestige their names could lend to the movement. Among these were Governor James V. Allred, lumber baron John Henry Kirby, H.M. Seaman, vice president of Kirby Lumber Corporation, and William J. Tucker, executive secretary of the Texas Game, Fish, and Oyster Commission, now part of Texas State Parks and Wildlife Department.<sup>6</sup> Many game preserve members were judges, doctors, or members of old, well-situated families in Southeast Texas. The organizational bonus offered by the game preserve was not its only advantage. Jackson was also able to use it as a place where scientists, government bureaucrats, newspaper reporters, and nature writers could congregate.

Jackson had more than his share of problems with the preserve. Deer he obtained for release there often were sick and required medication before being released.<sup>7</sup> Poaching could not be controlled. Newspaper clippings report that of four bears set loose on the lease, one was killed and barbecued with great fanfare by a local man and the other three soon disappeared.<sup>8</sup> The fencing Jackson constructed around the perimeter of the preserve was often torn down in the course of lumber operations, which continued throughout the life of the lease.<sup>9</sup> Jackson contemplated building several small lakes within the lease "for recreation and in order to increase populations of waterfowl."<sup>10</sup> I am not aware that he was able to complete any of these projects.

By the end of 1936 Jackson and his allies had both an organization and a land base for showing off the Big Thicket, but this was only a beginning. Virtually everything remained to be done. Though the Thicket, with its riches of woods and swamps, orchids and deer, was famous in southeast Texas and perhaps known in the rest of the state, it was utterly unknown elsewhere. Conservationists knew the Thicket through personal and family experience and folklore; but there appeared to be scarcely a shred of scientific data which could be used to explain the area's actual nature and content. Along with this difficulty came the perennial problem of explaining *where* the Big Thicket is, a question which conservationists tended to answer each according to their own predilections. Beyond these problems – of publicity, and of scientific base—remained the problems of politics. Should conservationists petition the state government for help? The federal government? If the federal govern-

ment, should they court the Department of Agriculture, to create some kind of national forest, or the Department of the Interior, to create a national park or perhaps a national wildlife refuge? And, whether or not these dilemmas could be resolved, in the meantime it was necessary to involve as many political leaders as possible.

Those starting the second Big Thicket environmental movement in the 1960s faced many of the same problems as Jackson and his allies did in the 1930s. But what Jackson accomplished in the 1930s and 1940s laid the foundation for the later movement. In outlining Jackson's further achievements I will deal first with the scientific, then the governmental, and finally the political parameters. Though these will be treated separately, it should be clear from the beginning that they remained profoundly interrelated.

Legend and folklore, some of it dark, have provided an aura of mystery for the Big Thicket; botany, zoology, and geography have provided the surest arguments for its preservation. The first systematic basis for these arguments was produced by biologists H.B. Parks and V.L. Cory in their *Biological Survey of the East Texas Big Thicket Area*.<sup>11</sup> Getting this work researched, written, and published turned out to be an arduous process. James Cozine points out that convincing Cory and Parks, at this time "the leading Botanist in the state,"<sup>12</sup> to undertake the project was no simple matter. Professor Don O. Baird, a biologist at Sam Houston State Teachers College, pleaded with the pair. Dr. Arthur B. Connor, director of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, and Dr. Walter F. Taylor of the United States Biological Survey stationed at A&M, continued to badger them, as did Jackson. Cozine reported:

In early August 1936, Connor wrote Parks and Cory asking them to cooperate on the project. In addition, Connor sent the botanists a copy of a telegram he had received from R. E. Jackson. In the telegram, Jackson indicated that U. S. Senator Morris Sheppard of Texarkana, Texas, strongly urged that a biological survey of the Big Thicket should be completed immediately.<sup>13</sup>

The continued urging of Parks was required to convince Cory to participate in the project. It is interesting that the first part of the botanists' stay in the Thicket, September 12, 1936 was on Jackson's lease. The next afternoon a hundred people gathered at the lease to celebrate the survey and listen to talks by the two scientists.<sup>14</sup>

If getting the survey completed required considerable effort, getting it published required more. From the time of Parks' and Cory's visit until the appearance of their booklet, Jackson was involved in an extensive correspondence concerning it.<sup>15</sup> For a time, Baird attempted to involve the printer at the state prison in Huntsville. In a letter dated May 30, 1937, he complained that publication might be delayed until June, and asked what a Beaumont printer might charge for a sixty-page booklet. On July 3, 1937, he wrote Jackson asking if more money towards publication might be forthcoming from a Beaumont source were the pamphlet dedicated to Ray Gill, recently deceased. On August 2, 1937, Baird again wrote Jackson complaining of

he stated that the manuscript would be published by the Sam Houston State Teachers College Press. Finally on December 14, 1937, Jackson wrote Walter P. Taylor that he had been sending copies of *Biological Survey of the East Texas Big Thicket Area* to all interested parties, though there had not been time to receive a reply. Besides financial difficulties, the right photographs had been hard to find and the printer had a heart attack. Though the pamphlet was published almost in 1938, it bore a 1936 publication date. Subsequent printings were dated 1938. The *Biological Survey* became the "Bible" of later Big Thicket environmentalists.

It would have been a landmark achievement if the Big Thicket pamphlet had been completed in time for the special meeting of the Texas Academy of Science in Beaumont in June 1937. This would have constituted a double triumph, for at this meeting the entire force of the scientific establishment in Texas was brought behind the Big Thicket movement. This was possible in part because that year Don O. Baird of Sam Houston State Teachers College in Huntsville was elected president of the Academy. The meeting, at the urging of Ray Gill, was co-sponsored by the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce. Not only was the meeting held under the theme "The Wise Conservation of Our Natural Resources," but the great majority of the talks concerned different aspects of the Big Thicket. At the end of the conference a resolution passed by the group strongly recommended the preservation of the Big Thicket. Nor was this all. After the closing of the meeting, participants were taken to Silsbee to hear a speech by "Hon. James V. Allred, Gov. of Texas." This was followed by a trip to State Forest Number One near Kirbyville, and then, the next day, by an all-day field trip to the Big Thicket. The field trip included instructions, a map, generous helpings of Big Thicket Mulligan Stew – with armadillo and baked crow for the "more daring souls" – and a talk about "The Big Thicket as it Used to Be" by pioneer hunter Uncle Fount Simmons.<sup>16</sup> In short, in every conceivable way the Texas Academy of Science convention in Beaumont was a triumph.

By the midpoint of 1937, then, Big Thicket enthusiasts had accomplished much. An effective organization had been created, a land base for meetings and hiking established, and a scientific basis for conservation achieved, at least in part. But if prospects appeared good in general, there remained one particular problem: politics. In what follows I will try to trace some of the political maneuverings of Jackson and his allies. As will become clear, 1930s conservationists left virtually no political stone unturned.

As early as March 20, 1935, Jackson had written a long letter to Governor James V. Allred asking about his attitude towards a "combined State and National or State Wild Life Conservation project to be put forth in the 'Big Thicket.'" Jackson added that he could secure "any where from 20,000 to 200,000 acres in the north part of Hardin and the south part of Polk counties." There is no record of an answer from Allred in Jackson's papers. From his letter, however, it is clear that conservationists were willing to take a state or federal route to their goal, *or both*. Efforts were made to interest the Federal Bureau of Biological Survey in the Thicket in 1936, beginning with its repre-

sentatives at Texas A&M College. The aid of Congressman Martin Dies was sought and obtained. Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, was urged to invest his bureau's resources in a survey of the region. A letter from Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace to Senator Morris Sheppard, on May 27, 1936, stated that the Bureau of Biological Survey could not possibly afford to buy "some 275,000 acres of land." The matter was referred to the regional forester in Atlanta, Georgia, for further investigation in terms of acquisition by the Forest Service. A letter from Ray Gill on June 4, 1936, informed Wallace that E.T. Howe of the U.S. Forest Service was looking over the Thicket with R.E. Jackson. An unsigned letter, dated July 14, 1936, from the U.S. Forest Service in Houston, Texas, stated that no moneys were available to establish a "combined forestry and game conservation area" in the Big Thicket and that there was a general feeling that any expansion of public forests in Texas should be "carried forward through state ownership."

Undeterred, Walter P. Taylor of the Bureau of Biological Survey at A&M wrote Jackson on August 19, 1936, that he was making a "new presentation of the Big Thicket proposition" to his Washington office. On October 12, Senator Morris Sheppard wrote Jackson that he had not yet been able to get the Biological Survey to act on the matter of doing a biological study of the Big Thicket area. On November 23, Sheppard wrote quoting at length from the chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey that although funds might become available in the future to purchase an interesting place like the big Thicket, no such funds were available then.<sup>17</sup> Sheppard pledged, however, to continue the fight. Letters from and to the Senator on July 23, 1937, July 31, 1937, and August 2, 1937, attest to his continuing efforts.

In a letter to Jerry B. Stillwell on February 24, 1938, Jackson summed up his struggle to involve government:

I had a conference with (Governor) Allred about a year and a half ago, with very little encouragement due to lack of funds as the state was broke, however we contemplate an invitation to him. our state park man and Mr. Fuller of the national park service at Austin, and have also discussed this with Mr. Tucker and he is for us 100% and have written (Secretary) Wallace and Oberholser of the Biological Survey, Senators Sheppard and Connally, Congressman Dies of our government at Washington, in fact I have written to nearly everybody in the USA that seemed to have anything to do with it including Mrs. Roosevelt.

The conservationists appear to have approached the National Park Service last, having started with state government, then moved to the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Biological Survey and National Forest Service. A great deal of correspondence relating to the Biological Survey and Forest Service appears in Jackson's correspondence, but – strangely – almost nothing involving the National Park Service. A letter from Jackson to J.R. McDougall on March 16, 1938, of the Santa Fe office of the Park Service, does thank McDougall for his brief visit to the Thicket and promises that he will receive a map of the area shortly.<sup>18</sup>

By mid-1938 Jackson and his allies appeared to have only the National Park

Thicket fitted the requirements required for national park status. The proposal that conservationists put forward is well known. The East Texas Big Thicket Association proposed the creation of a 435,000-acre Big Thicket National Park, which Jackson was convinced could be purchased for \$5.00 per acre.

If a specific goal had been set, and if it had secured the backing of Senator Morris Sheppard and Congressman Martin Dies, as well as the concurrence of Senator Tom Connally, why was the national park never created?<sup>19</sup> There are some generally agreed-on factors, to which Jackson's correspondence adds at least two more. First and foremost, was the Second World War, which, to put it mildly, drew attention away from conservation toward other, more pressing, matters. In the midst of a desperate universal military struggle, saving Mother Nature seemed a minor matter, while using natural resources – including forest products resources – to their fullest became a paramount concern. Second, the proposed national park was to be situated largely in Polk County, and that county became the site of a new oil field.<sup>20</sup> Competition between raw-materials wealth and environmental concern has rarely favored the latter.

But even if war and oil strikes – and the death of Senator Sheppard in 1941 – had not transpired, the creation of the park faced another steep hurdle, formed by Texas' newly created national forests. The Lone Star State had used powerful political muscle in Congress to get its national forests, and Congress was unlikely to appropriate more millions soon for an additional 435,000 acres. A glance at a map of East Texas shows four national forests making an arc over the Big Thicket, from west to northeast. Why a new federal sanctuary *in the same area*?

Faced with so many obstacles, it is not surprising that the Big Thicket movement lost momentum. What is surprising is that it seemed almost to disappear after the war. I can suggest two reasons, based on Jackson's papers, for this demise – if “burnout” and a sense of futility are not sufficient. The first concerns the organizational problems of the Big Thicket Association of East Texas. It was above all, an organization of chiefs and not of Indians. That Jackson was able to draw so many eminent people into its ranks was a tribute to his persuasiveness as well as to the fact that people felt that he could be trusted. But when names pass out of fashion, or power, or are no longer affixed to the living, the organization composed of them suffers. At its peak the association seems never to have had much more than 100 members.

Nor was it highly organized. Only two “minutes” of an association meeting have been found for May 7, 1936, and May 26, 1936. In a letter to a friend on March 16, 1939, Jackson admitted that by then some “form of a stable organization” was needed for the Big Thicket, and on April 29, 1939, the *Beaumont Enterprise* noted a “reorganizational” meeting. No record of this or subsequent meetings, or a membership list, exist. Correspondence between Jackson and Governor Allan Shivers on June 7, 1950, contains proposed articles of incorporation for an organization now titled the “East Texas Big Thicket Association of Texas.”<sup>21</sup> These articles, however, were never filed with the secretary of state.<sup>22</sup>

To such organizational problems must be added Jackson's increasing willingness to pursue any number of goals, many contradictory to the pursuit of a national park. If the writer can be allowed to draw on his own experience, the achievement of any significant goal – particularly a political one – requires tenacity and exceptional single-mindedness. As time wore on Jackson's goal of creating a national park began to splinter into smaller projects. Though his correspondence continued to involve letters to and from conservationists, journalists, political leaders, and others concerning the Big Thicket and its fate, it increasingly contained letters on any number of subjects: some not exactly consistent with or related to environmental issues. For example, he fathered a plan to get school children to "work more and more on botany and biology." He again pursued efforts to interest the State Parks Board in the Thicket. He tried to get the U.S. Army to establish an air base in the Big Thicket to protect the Gulf Coast Texas petrochemical complex.<sup>23</sup> He suggested to H.M. Seaman of Kirby Lumber Company the creation of a 150,000-acre preserve plus a 1,250-acre "Botanical Garden Second to None on Earth." He tried to turn his hunting lease into a stock-growing resource for the war effort, writing Senator Tom Connally and others for financial help. He attempted to influence national tax policy towards a "single tax" standard. He tried to interest the Texas Garden Clubs in a "Botanical Garden Second to None on Earth" in the Big Thicket at Bragg. Some thirty letters from 1947 through 1950 express his zeal to utilize hot wells in Hardin County, originally two wells near Silsbee, then one well at Honey Island, for the treatment of poliomyelitis. Late in 1950 he approached the National Muscular Dystrophy Research Foundation with similar goals. These and other projects divided the conservationist's energies. One can not help but think that their pursuit created a confused and contradictory image in the minds of the political leaders he tried to influence.

One ends up with a long list of negative factors, lined up like a series of dominoes, or better, like a series of tank traps, any one of which could derail a conservationist onslaught, and all of which, taken together, explain why no Big Thicket National Park resulted. Still, one is puzzled. The East Texas Big Thicket Association was not merely stymied – halted in its tracks – by the events of the 1940s; after World War II, it seems to have disappeared entirely. It was not that Jackson ceased working towards his goal. That would have been alien to his character. But henceforth he seemed to be working alone, and with little public impact. The puzzle of the disappearance of the early Big Thicket "movement" is one that this writer is unable to resolve.

Little matter. When we look back on what Jackson and his friends accomplished we can only be grateful. It would have been difficult to have begun the Big Thicket movement of the 1960s without their accomplishments. The second movement would have had to begin *de novo*, from scratch, with no explanation possible as to why, if the "Thicket" is so valuable, no one had ever thought of saving it before. But the debt of later conservationists was greater than this. Jackson and his allies provided the first scientific analyses of

perfect. But they were a beginning, which later field ecologists such as Claude McLeod and Geraldine Watson could perfect. Equally important, they had convinced a large part of the science community in Texas to support them. This, too, was to be useful in the future.

Equally important were their efforts, which were at least partially successful in each case, to involve the federal bureaucracy. They provoked it to make surveys and compile data which could be utilized by later bureaucrats when the issue of the Big Thicket was raised again. In the same way, Big Thicket advocates managed to create a political background for subsequent environmentalism by involving state and national political figures in Texas in the effort to save a part of the region for posterity. Similarly, their successful efforts to involve business and professional leaders in the cause were to bear fruit. It became socially acceptable to be a conservationist in Texas. And leaders have influence.

Finally, it is an interesting fact that, just as many of the participants in Jackson's hunting lease became members of the East Texas Big Thicket Association, so a significant number of the members of this group were to be members, some founding members, of the Big Thicket Association of the 1960s. Among these were: Lance Rosier, Alf Roark, Mrs. Bruce (Bessie) Reid, Mrs. J.L. (Corrie) Hooks, Joe Combs, Joe Heiseer, and Louise Loomis. Jackson's work in the 1930s may have seemed to him an exercise in lost hopes and failed projects. That would have been understandable. But in the long run he succeeded better than he knew.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>A list of his organizational affiliations sent to me by his grandson, George B. Hardy, of Silsbee, includes the following: Jackson was one of the early members of the First Baptist Church of Silsbee; of the Order of Railway Conductors; of the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee; of the National Academy of Science, and the Texas Academy of Science; president of the Sabine-Neches Amateur Baseball League; a member of the Baseball Booster Club of Beaumont, Texas; president of the East Texas Nature Club; president of the Hardin County Cooperative Pasture and Game Preserve; member of the Southeast Texas Game and Fish Protective Association of Beaumont, Texas; first president of the East Texas Big Thicket Association; affiliated with the American Association of Advancement of Science, Texas Chemurgic Council, National Audubon Society, National Wilderness Society; connected with the Texas Forest Service of A&M College; and a member of the Royal Arch Mason, Silsbee Lodge No. 927, Chapter in Beaumont No. 188, Silsbee Chapter in Kountze No. 312, the Beaumont Council No. 126 of the Royal and Select Masters, and the Silsbee Chapter No. 298 of the Order of the Eastern Star. It should be added that in 1937 he was significantly involved in the founding of the Texas Federation of Nature Clubs.

<sup>2</sup>Quotes and citations from R.E. Jackson's correspondence are cited in the text or in footnotes. I want to thank Mr. and Mrs. George B. Hardy for making copies of Jackson's correspondence available to Maxine Johnston and myself.

<sup>3</sup>The document also notes the names of C. W. McPhail, Hon. Alf Roark, Judge D.M. Love, and N.A. Cravens as persons interested in the fate of the Big Thicket but unable to attend. A letter to C.R. Bertron had been returned undelivered.

<sup>4</sup>"Lease. Southwestern Lumber Company of New Jersey and Kirby Lumber Company -to- R. E. Jackson." The original date, 1933, has been corrected in ink. This document is not signed or notarized. The original is probably in the files of Kirby Lumber Company.

<sup>5</sup>A letter from Jackson dated May 23, 1939, to William J. Tucker, "Ex Secy Game Fish and O. Com.," requests that Tucker certify enclosed papers making William Sanger an unsalaried game warden for the Hardin County Cooperative Pasture and Game Preserve. Apparently Jackson had experienced some trouble finding a satisfactory warden. He mentioned that the papers for "Mr. Stone" were being returned to Tucker, Stone having "proved not worthy." A letter from Tucker to Jackson dated June 22, 1939, contains the commission for "W.L. Sanger." However, a letter from Tucker to Jackson dated September 8, 1939, notes that at that time Sanger was no longer a resident of Hardin County. A letter from Tucker to Jackson dated April 4, 1941, mentions a "Mr. Handley" who has been employed by the East Texas Big Thicket Association. He requested that Handley be bonded if the state of Texas granted him a commission.

<sup>6</sup>Members of the Hardin County Cooperative Pasture and Game Preserve present at the organizational meeting of the Big Thicket Association of East Texas included Dr. Joe Record, M.L. Yount, William J. Tucker, R.E. Jackson, and Ray Gill. N.A. Cravens is listed as unable to attend. Dr. W.H. Dameron was one of those proposed as a vice president, for Polk County.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. W.J. Tucker, August 28, 1936, February 14, 1938. In this letter Tucker also mentioned the possible release of wild turkey in the Jackson lease.

<sup>8</sup>Prof. Don O. Baird reported to Jackson an article in the previous Sunday *Houston Chronicle* which described local people chasing the bears out of Jackson's lease with dogs "...one ending up at Livingston, killed for fun and food." In a letter to Dr. Taylor August 20, 1937, Jackson responded that he had seen one of his bears not far from camp, "as fat and black as could be..."

<sup>9</sup>To County Judge Alf Roark, October 1, 1940.

<sup>10</sup>An undated map, evidently marked by Jackson to show the area of a proposed park, includes at least three potential lakes ("Approximate Submerged Area to be used for Fishing=Camping=Recreation etc."). Acreage of these lakes is not given, but I estimate 2,000 to 3,000 acres.

<sup>11</sup>H.B. Parks and V.L. Cory, *Biological Survey of the East Texas Big Thicket Area*, 1936.

<sup>12</sup>James Joseph Cozine, "Assault on a Wilderness: The Big Thicket of East Texas." (Doctoral Dissertation, Texas A&M University, August, 1976), p.169.

<sup>13</sup>Cozine, "Assault on a Wilderness," p.172.

<sup>14</sup>Cozine, "Assault on a Wilderness," p. 173.

<sup>15</sup>Don O. Baird to Jackson, September 22, 1936; Walter P. Taylor to Jackson, September 30, 1936; H.B. Parks to Jackson, October 1, 1936; Jackson to Morris Sheppard, October 5, 1936; V.L. Cory to Jackson, October 6, 1936; Morris Sheppard to Jackson, October 9, 1936; H.B. Parks to Jackson, October 12, 1936; Morris Sheppard to Jackson, October 12, 1936; Jackson to Parks, October 16, 1936; Walter P. Taylor to Jackson, October 21, 1936; H.B. Parks to Jackson, October 27, 1936; V.L. Cory to Jackson, October 29, 1936; Ray Gill to Jackson, October 30, 1936; Don O. Baird to Jackson, November 16, 1936; Jackson to Don O. Baird, November 24, 1936; Don O. Baird to Jackson, November 30, 1936; Morris Sheppard to Jackson, December 1, 1936; H.B. Parks to Jackson, December 11, 1936; Jackson to James V. Allred, December 9, 1936; Don O. Baird to Jackson, December 12, 1936; Jackson to Don O. Baird, December 14, 1936; Don O. Baird to Jackson, December 25, 1936; Bessie M. Reid to Jackson, December 28, 1936; H.B. Parks to Jackson, December 11, 1936; Jackson to James V. Allred, December 9, 1936; Don O. Baird to Jackson, December 12, 1936; Jackson to Don O. Baird, December 14, 1936; Don O. Baird to Jackson, December 25, 1936; Bessie M. Reid to Jackson, December 28, 1936; H.B. Parks to Jackson, December 30, 1936. The writer will omit further correspondence over Parks and Cory's manuscript. What is given above is sufficient to indicate the extent of Jackson's involvement in the project.

<sup>16</sup>This account of the meeting on June 25-27, 1937, of the Texas Academy of Science is taken from the program of that meeting contained in Jackson's correspondence. Cf. also *Houston Chronicle*, June 19, 1937, Beaumont Newspaper, June 27, 1937, *Beaumont Enterprise*, August 18, 1937. Jackson also spoke at meetings of the Texas Academy of Science at Dallas in November 1937 and in Huntsville in April 1938. Later he spoke at a Texas Academy of Science Meeting in

<sup>17</sup>At least one foray into the Big Thicket was managed by the Bureau of Biological Survey "between August 25 and September 10, 1937." This involved a game management survey of Polk County by bureau staff stationed at Texas A&M College. A letter from J. Paul Miller, August 8, 1938, associate biologist in the Washington, D.C., offices of the Bureau of Biological Survey, thanks him for showing himself and "Mr. Powell" around the Big Thicket. He concedes the need for a "more thorough" survey.

<sup>18</sup>A letter of April 23, 1938, from Arno B. Cammerer, Director, National Park Service, to Senator Sheppard, reports that the Park Service has completed "preliminary studies" of the Big Thicket and "strongly recommends that a substantial portion be preserved. Unfortunately, no funds are presently available to do so." R.E. Jackson's two-page, single-spaced letter to Sheppard argued adamantly that Park Service estimates of a \$4,000,000 cost were exaggerated. A \$5 x 435,000 acre figure (\$2,075,000) was more accurate. James A. Cozine, in "Assault on a Wilderness," p. 163, reports that Herbert Maier, a regional director of the National Park Service, informed Big Thicket conservationists in January 1938, that he planned to visit the area.

<sup>19</sup>No materials concerning such a bill exist in Jackson's papers.

<sup>20</sup>James A. Cozine, "Assault on a Wilderness: The Big Thicket of East Texas," pp. 163-164.

<sup>21</sup>"Charter of the East Texas Big Thicket Association of Texas, Silsbee Texas." This title page is followed by a statement of purpose and two sets of "articles," the first stating the purpose and general structure of the organization, the second spelling out the duties of the officers.

<sup>22</sup>During the years immediately preceding World War II, a second organization, the Big Thicket Federation, emerged. It seems to have consisted of a group of southeast Texas women's clubs, perhaps loosely affiliated with the Big Thicket Association of East Texas. Jackson was elected to an "honorary membership" in the Federation in 1941. There is also a collection of letters and other materials in Jackson's correspondence concerning the formation of the Texas Federation of Nature Clubs, of which the Big Thicket Association of East Texas was a member.

<sup>23</sup>There is a thick file dating from February 8 through December 16, 1940, in Jackson's correspondence concerning this proposal. Jackson wavered between creating a training base, a bomber base, and even a submarine base in the Big Thicket. Central to his project was the damming of Menard Creek and the creation of a runway next to new lake under the overhang of the trees. Around 20,000 acres were to be involved. Correspondence on this subject continued into 1941.