

A FAMILY CORPORATION

Fred W. Besley retired in 1942, after 36 years of distinguished service as Maryland's first State Forester. A central goal of his retirement was to own and manage forest land using the techniques he had encouraged others to use for so many years. To that end, Besley partnered with his son-in-law S. Procter Rodgers (an industrial engineer from Baltimore) to form the close family corporation, Besley & Rodgers, Inc. Its purpose as stated in its charter is "to acquire, manage and produce continuous crops of standing timber and wildlife on forest land." The corporation's holdings are located primarily on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, with its headquarters in Dorchester County.

Much of the company's land (acquired from 1942-1946) was in relatively poor condition, having been harvested during the war years with little



Fred Besley Surveying



Fred Besley (right) with his grandson and Procter Rodgers, c. 1950

attention to reforestation. While rich in wildlife, the tracts had not been managed sustainably.

Fred Besley and Procter Rodgers carefully surveyed the tracts, then directed the planting of loblolly pine on depleted forest, as well as agricultural lands which had been abandoned.



Besley & Rodgers, Inc.—A Family Corporation

Roads were constructed to provide access for forest management and fire protection. The tracts were leased to responsible hunt clubs who set out to improve the quality of wildlife management including, in a few cases, the construction of ponds for waterfowl. The tracts look very different today than they did a half century ago.

The forest land on the road before you bears the colorful name "Ruby's Puzzle." It constitutes 354 acres of forested wetlands, which are the product of more than 60 years of sustainable forest management, with particular concern for sensitive wetland ecosystems and endangered species. It is one of five tracts in this vicinity—1040 acres total—which were sold to the State of Maryland in 2010 by Besley & Rodgers, Inc. and are now protected for the long-term as part of Maryland's Chesapeake Forest. The other tracts also have interesting names like Barnes Landing, Head of Creek, The Evans Place and Wells.

The land on which you are standing was donated by Dal Insley, a neighbor and lifelong friend of the Besley and Rodgers families.

"When I retired, I decided to practice what I had preached during my career." – Fred W. Besley