HISTORY OF THE FLORIDA ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A. N. Tissot 2, L. A. Hetrick 3, and Andrew J. Rogers 4

Eleven men interested in entomology and related subjects met in Science Hall on the campus of the University of Florida, the afternoon of January 5, 1916. The group gathered for the expressed purpose of organizing an entomological society and they proceeded in a businesslike manner. The name Florida Entomological Society must have seemed so appropriate for the new organization that it was adopted without consideration of any other name. J. R. Watson, who was so intimately associated with the Society until his death in 1946, was selected as temporary chairman, and E. W. Berger as temporary secretary. A committee of three was appointed to draw up a constitution which was adopted at the first regular meeting on January 17, 1916. At that meeting the first permanent officers of the Society were elected. They were: President, J. R. Watson; Vice-President, Wilmon Newell; Secretary-Treasurer, R. N. Wilson; and Member of the Executive Committee, H. S. Davis.

The records and proceedings of the Society are not clear on the matter of charter members, but apparently all persons who affiliated with the Society during the first five meetings in 1916 were considered as charter members. These included E. W. Berger, T. N. Bradford, K. E. Bragdon, H. S. Davis, H. L. Dozier, J. C. Goodwin, Fritz Hatcher, S. P. Harn, A. C. Mason, Wilmon Newell, F. M. O'Byrne, W. E. Pennington, Frank Stirling, T. Van Huyning, Shirley B. Walker, J. R. Watson, and R. N. Wilson.

The Florida Entomological Society has the distinction of being the first entomological society organized in the South and it is among the twelve oldest in the United States. Notices of its establishment appeared in the February 4, 1916, issue of Science, the February number of Journal of Economic Entomology and in the March, 1916, number of Entomological News. Each of these reports named the officers of the new society and the item in Science gave the titles of papers read at the first meeting. Entomological News wished the Society "a long and useful life."

Few scientific organizations have enjoyed the rapid growth achieved by the Florida Entomological Society. During the first year its membership quadrupled and by the end of 1917 the Society had 100 active members and 20 associate members. However, as so often happens with individuals and organizations, the period of healthy growth and active interest enjoyed by the Society during its formative years, at times gave way to apathy and loss of interest, as well as a reduction in members.

In the beginning, monthly meetings were held except during summer, when many of the members were away on vacation. Occasionally special meetings were called when distinguished entomologists such as Doctors Herbert Osborn, H. T. Fernald, O. A. Johanssen, W. S. Blatchley, and others visited the University of Florida campus. Sometimes the Society held

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1 Prepared at request of Dr. Ellwood C. Nance, former President University of Tampa, for use in his three-volume history of Florida.
2 Entomologist, Agricultural Experiment Station, Gainesville, Florida.
3 Professor, Entomology Department, University of Florida, Gainesville.
4 Entomologist, Florida State Board of Health, Entomological Research Center, Vero Beach, Florida.
joint sessions with other organizations, such as Florida Academy of Sciences and the Horticultural Seminar, when these met in Gainesville. In spite of the increasing membership, attendance at the monthly meetings remained about the same. Minutes of the meetings show that eight to twelve persons usually were present and for the most part these faithful few were the men who founded the Society. In the early nineteen-twenties, meetings became less regular and attendance poorer. This condition persisted until the mid-thirties, and in some years only one meeting was held. The financial condition of the Society suffered similar deterioration and it seemed doubtful that the organization could long survive.

A handful of staunch members, led by Professor J. R. Watson, kept the Society alive through these years of adversity. There are no published reports, and no minutes can be found, so it seems fairly certain that no business meeting was held in 1934 and it may be assumed that the officers of the previous year continued to serve. On May 24, 1935, a meeting was held, at which time the following officers were elected: President, W. L. Thompson; Vice-President, A. N. Tissot; Secretary, G. B. Merrill; Editor, J. R. Watson; and Business Manager, H. E. Bratley. At that meeting, on the recommendation of Professor Watson, the Society voted to hold annual meetings in lieu of the nominal monthly ones. The first in the series of annual meetings was held in Gainesville, October 30-31, 1936. Fifteen papers were presented at this meeting. There was a good attendance of members and guests and everyone enthusiastically acclaimed the plan to hold annual meetings rather than more frequent ones. Since 1936, meetings have been held yearly, except in 1945 when the meeting was canceled because of war-imposed, travel restrictions which would have held attendance to a very small number. In that year election of officers was held by mail ballot. In spite of the success of the 1936 Annual Meeting it was felt that further stimulation of interest was desirable so President R. L. Miller called a general meeting to be held in Gainesville, March 20, 1937, for the purpose of reorganizing and revitalizing the Society. At that time the group authorized the president to appoint a committee to prepare a new constitution and by-laws. J. W. Wilson, J. R. Watson, E. W. Berger, and J. T. Creighton were named to serve on this committee. The committee functioned promptly and well and at the 1937 Annual Meeting a proposed constitution and by-laws was presented by Dr. Creighton. The Society voted to accept this as a temporary working guide for one year. It was formally adopted at the 1939 Annual Meeting. This document, patterned after the constitution of the American Association of Economic Entomologists, gave the Society excellent guidance for its various activities, and specifically defined and provided for all normal functions of the organization. With only minor amendments the constitution has served the Society well through the intervening years.

The 1948 meeting was historically significant for two reasons. Each of the previous annual meetings had been designated by the year in which it was held. The 1948 meeting was known as the Thirty-first Annual Meeting, as it occurred thirty-one years after the founding of the Society. Subsequent meetings have been designated in ordinal sequence. This meeting was held at the San Juan Hotel in Orlando and it thus had the distinction of being the first meeting of the Society away from Gainesville. All phases of entomology had flourished and expanded in recent years and entomologists
were stationed in all sections of Florida. It thus was thought desirable to hold subsequent meetings in other parts of the State where suitable facilities and accommodations were available. Meetings were held at Tampa, 1949; Sanford, 1950; Winter Haven, 1951; Fort Pierce, 1952; Miami, 1953; Bradenton, 1954; Jacksonville, 1955; Tallahassee, 1956; Orlando, 1957; Tampa, 1958; and Miami, 1959.

Other factors undoubtedly entered the picture and it would be difficult to determine how much of the improvement could be attributed to the change in meeting plans; but the Society certainly has flourished since the system of annual meetings was inaugurated. In 1938, one year after the annual meetings were started, the Society had a membership of 79. Nine members lived in other states and the District of Columbia and the others were residents of Florida. Since then the scope of influence of the Society has widened greatly and now reaches to other parts of the world. It was reported at the 1959 annual meeting that the Society then had 289 members. Reference to the membership roll shows that 61 of the members lived outside the borders of Florida. Fifty of these were residents of other states, the District of Columbia, the Canal Zone, and Puerto Rico. At least one member of the Society lived in each of the following foreign lands: Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Italy, Japan, Mexico, and Nicaragua.

The astonishing early growth of the Society attests to the enthusiasm and interest of its founders. These men were keenly aware of the great importance of entomology and they were imbued with a missionary spirit which made them want to share their interest and knowledge with others. The purposes and ideals of the group were clearly stated as follows: "The aim of the Society is to stimulate an active interest in entomology on the part of Floridians. There is at the present time a marked dearth of amateur entomologists in the State. Membership in the Society is by no means limited to professional entomologists. Anyone who is interested in, or desires information on 'bugs' may become a member."

A spirit of willing cooperation is good for any organization and the Florida Entomological Society showed this trait, early in its history. Within months of its founding the Society considered the possibility of affiliating with the Florida Academy of Sciences. Negotiations were finally completed and in April, 1917, the Society became Section B of the Academy. It developed later that the constitution of the Academy required members of sections to be full members of the Academy and pay membership dues. This caused dissatisfaction among the entomologists and in April, 1918, the Society voted to sever its relations with the Academy.

Late in 1917 the Lee County Entomological Society presented a petition requesting permission to become a Branch of the Florida Entomological Society. The constitution of the Society did not provide for branches but it was amended and on January 15, 1918, the Lee County Society was accepted as a Branch of the Florida Entomological Society. At the time of application, the new Branch had twelve members. Five of these men were members of the parent society and their President was a charter member. Professor Watson visited the Lee County group and later wrote "A more wide-awake and earnest group of men would be hard to find. Men who will spend the whole of a summer day in Florida in a grove looking for citrus canker and then spend the evening studying entomology will be heard from. May the branch grow as has the parent." Unfortunately these fond hopes
were not realized and there is no further information on the Branch. A vegetable insect laboratory at Fort Myers was closed early in 1920 and this may have contributed to the early death of the Lee County Branch of the Society.

The Society cooperated with various other organizations in activities of scientific or public interest. Thus, in February, 1923, a resolution addressed to the Gainesville City Board of Health expressed the hope that "a thoroughly effective anti-mosquito campaign be staged in Gainesville and vicinity." Members of the Society residing in Gainesville pledged themselves to aid in an educational campaign and they offered to help in locating breeding places of mosquitoes or in directing control measures. A few months later it was reported that a mosquito control program had been set up in Gainesville, that the Board of Health had appropriated $500 for the work and that destruction or oiling of mosquito breeding places was in progress.

At the 1938 Annual Meeting, the Society authorized the Executive Committee to petition the American Association of Economic Entomologists for affiliate membership in that organization for the Florida Entomological Society. A petition signed by the President and Secretary was sent to the Secretary of A.A.E.E. in December, 1938. The petition was published in the Proceedings of the Fifty-first Annual Meeting of A.A.E.E., in the February, 1939, number of the Journal of Economic Entomology, with the following comment: "This petition, presented at the first Executive Committee meeting, was accepted, referred to the Association and confirmed at the final business session." The Florida Entomological Society thus became the first state society to affiliate with the national group of professional entomologists.

The Florida Entomological Society and the Newell Entomological Society, a student organization at the University of Florida, were hosts to the Cotton States Branch of the American Association of Economic Entomologists at the Branch meeting in Tampa, February 21-23, 1939. Once again, in December, 1949, the Florida Entomological Society served as host to visiting entomologists, when it met in Tampa in conjunction with the annual meetings of the Entomological Society of America and the American Association of Economic Entomologists. In addition to helping with the general arrangements for the meetings, the Society sponsored and conducted a two day field trip to the Everglades National Park for about a dozen visitors from the North.

The 1940 annual meeting was of particular significance as it marked the completion of a quarter century of useful service by the Society. On the evening of December 13, the Silver Anniversary Dinner of the Florida Entomological Society was held in honor of Professor J. R. Watson, charter member, first president, and Editor of the Florida Entomologist since the first issue appeared in June, 1917. Three other charter members, Dr. Wilmont Newell, Dr. E. W. Berger and Mr. J. C. Goodwin also were present at the dinner. They and several others gave acclaim to the wonderful service rendered by Professor Watson who unquestionably had done more for the Society than any other member.

Nearly forty years after the Lee County Branch of the Society was admitted, another group of entomologists expressed a desire to unite with the Florida Entomological Society. At the 39th Annual Meeting in Tallahassee
the Sub-Tropical Entomologists of Florida presented a petition requesting affiliation as a Branch of the Society. This group came into being in September, 1955, when Dr. John E. Porter, U.S. Public Health Service Entomologist, called together 13 persons interested in entomology, in an informal meeting at the University of Miami to discuss the desirability of forming an Entomological Society in the Miami area. After three more informal monthly meetings with an average attendance of 22 persons, the group voted to organize as the Sub-Tropical Entomologists of Florida. Meetings are held monthly and varied phases of entomology are studied and discussed. In addition, the group plans and develops special projects designed to stimulate interest in entomology and to "distribute widely knowledge pertaining to insects." The petition of the group was favorably accepted, and at the 40th annual meeting in Orlando on September 13, 1957, the Sub-Tropical Branch in Miami was formally received into the Florida Entomological Society. This affiliation should prove highly profitable for the parent society and the Branch as well as to the science of Entomology in general.

An account of the service activities of the Florida Entomological Society would be far from complete without some mention of the "Entomology in Action" program. This began with the preparation, by Lewis M. Wright, of a short talk illustrated with a series of 35 mm. color slides depicting entomology in action. Mr. Wright gave the talk at the 1957 annual meeting and stated that it and the slides were available to members of the Society who wished to give them before service clubs, 4-H clubs, and other groups. At that same meeting an Entomology in Action committee was named. From Mr. Wright’s slides and other sources the committee assembled thirty 8 x 10 color prints of pictures to "catch the eye of the student and possibly cause him to consider entomology as a career." These prints were framed and mounted on five plywood panels which form an exhibit 11 feet long. The display was designed especially for use with 4-H groups but it has been exhibited on many other occasions.

Several entomological events and numerous insect related activities in Florida have greatly influenced the Florida Entomological Society through the years. Many of the early members were State Plant Board personnel engaged in the citrus canker eradication program. Plant Commissioner Wilmot Newell led in this campaign and he also directed both State and Federal forces in the successful eradication of the Mediterranean fruit fly in 1929-30. The Plant Board played a major role in the eradication of the second "Med fly" invasion in 1956-57 and participated in the programs involving the citrus blackfly, the white-fringed beetles, the imported fire ant, the screw-worm fly, and other pests.

Much entomological work is done in various divisions of the University of Florida and other educational institutions in the State. The Department of Entomology in the College of Agriculture has trained many of the entomologists in Florida, and its staff and students established the Newell Entomological Society. This organization joined the Florida Entomological Society in various activities and functions. Agricultural Experiment Station entomologists in Gainesville and at the branch stations and field laboratories have made worthwhile contributions to the agricultural economy of Florida. Mention should also be made of the work of Extension Service
entomologists and of naturalists in the Biology Departments of universities and colleges in Florida.

The State Board of Health was created in 1889 after an epidemic of yellow fever in 1888. The scope of its activities gradually broadened and in recent years this Board has had a phenomenal growth. In 1946 the Bureau of Malaria Control was established and this has now become the Division of Entomology, State Health Board. The Division established a Research Center at Vero Beach which works on all phases of mosquito and sand fly problems and their control. This modern laboratory is unique in many respects and it has few equals anywhere in the world.

Federal entomologists stationed in various parts of Florida have participated in many entomological activities. Special mention should be made of the Orlando Laboratory of the Division of Insects Affecting Man and Animals, which did such valuable work during World War II and is still continuing its activities. Also in Orlando, the Fruit Insects Laboratory is doing research on pests of citrus and other subtropical fruits. Federal entomologists also have taken part in control or eradication campaigns on several introduced insect pests.

The phenomenal growth of agriculture in Florida brought a corresponding increase in insect pest problems. This in turn produced a great need for all sorts of pest control chemicals and application machinery, as well as the services of workers to make, sell, and apply these products. There has been a tremendous expansion of the insecticide industry in Florida, particularly in the past decade. Florida residents have demanded more and more help with pest control problems in and about their homes. This has brought a rapid increase in the number of commercial pest control agencies in the State.

Entomologists associated with the various State, Federal, and commercial organizations have formed the backbone of the Florida Entomological Society and from their ranks have come its officers and committee members. Many of these men later went to other assignments and the influence of the Society thus has been carried to many parts of the world.

The original constitution of the Florida Entomological Society made provision for certain functions and activities including publication of a periodical. Taking advantage of this privilege, the Society, at the meeting of April 23, 1917, voted "that a committee of three with the President as chairman be formed to make arrangements for a publication to be issued by this Society and to report at the next monthly meeting." The President, Dr. E. W. Berger, appointed Professor J. R. Watson and Mr. H. S. Davis to serve with him on the committee. At the next meeting on May 21, 1917, the committee made its report and the Society voted to "arrange for the publication of a periodical at intervals to be decided by the editorial staff entitled The Florida Buggist, with the subtitle, The Official Organ of the Florida Entomological Society. J. R. Watson was elected Editor, E. W. Berger, Associate Editor, and K. E. Bragdon, Business Manager. It also was provided that in so far as possible all papers presented before the Society and all the Brief and Timely notes given at the meetings be published either complete or in condensed form in The Florida Buggist. The Society authorized the Business Manager "to solicit advertisements of the proper kind to assist in financing publication; accepting advertising matter
only from those companies who deal in articles concerning insect control, the study of entomology, etc., and whose reliability can be guaranteed."

Volume 1, Number 1, of the Florida Buggist, designated "Summer Number", was dated June 21, 1917. This was a twelve-page issue and its size determined the pattern for the next three numbers. Later issues varied somewhat in size but for the next several years they generally contained 16 or 20 pages. The original plan to publish one volume of four numbers per year has been followed through the years with only slight deviation. In 1918 and again in 1924 and 1941 two numbers were combined in one issue. During the difficult middle thirties publication became somewhat irregular, a situation common to most entomological journals, but it never was discontinued. Pages in the first two volumes were numbered consecutively through both volumes but thereafter each volume began a new page series. Volume 42, published in 1959, contained 194 pages. The largest volume to date, Vol. 37, published in 1954, contained 220 pages. Number 2 of this volume was a commemorative issue for the Centennial of Professional Entomology and it contained 72 pages.

The name The Florida Buggist was used for only three volumes of the periodical. With Number 1 of Volume 4 the name was changed to The Florida Entomologist and thereby hangs a tale of one of the few serious controversies among members of the Florida Entomological Society. The first evidence of dissatisfaction with the name of the periodical is an item in the minutes of the meeting of November 19, 1917, which reads: "The matter of a suitable heading for 'The Florida Buggist' was discussed and it was voted that this be left to the discretion of the editors." Apparently nothing was done about this until the meeting of February 23, 1920. The minutes for that meeting show that President G. B. Merrill, Vice President C. M. Hunt, Secretary J. H. Montgomery and eight other members were present and they also include this item: "Under the head of new business Dr. Montgomery presented for consideration of the Society a proposition to change the name of the official organ of the Society. There was considerable discussion which was participated in by practically all members present, and after considering various suggestions decision was finally arrived at that the name of the publication be changed from 'The Florida Buggist' to 'The Florida Entomologist', this upon motion of Mr. O'Byrne seconded by Montgomery." Obviously the decision to change the name was not unanimous for on the editorial page of The Florida Buggist, Volume 3, No. 4, March, 1920, we find the following: "In accordance with a vote of the Society at its February meeting, The Florida Buggist will, with the new volume, become The Florida Entomologist.

"Yes, and the Business Manager regrets that this change of name was made without at least a month's previous notice, and without getting the vote of the non-resident members. It is the writer's belief that changes of name in a publication should not be hastily made especially when it is considered that The Buggist has completed three years of an honorable record, being successful far beyond the anticipation of its originators. A few people, somewhere in the United States, have been critical of the name Buggist, and so the movers, for a change, Buggists who visited the Entomological meetings at St. Louis in December, rushed home and ology it must be with 'all other ologies whatsoever.' Verily, like a rush to cover of chickens from a shadow.
"If those who are similarly minded will voice their sentiments by writing at once to the Secretary, there is still time for reconsideration. If the name must be changed, the writer would suggest The Florida Insectist—a name that is new and different and not stale. E. W. B."

Eighteen non-resident members did write as suggested. All favored the name Florida Entomologist, so it was retained and used without further question. The four issues of Volume 4 had "(Formerly The Florida Buggist)" under the name The Florida Entomologist but thereafter even this reminder of the old name ceased to appear.

Many persons and organizations have helped in numerous ways to make The Florida Entomologist a successful and respected publication. Some have made outstanding contributions that deserve special recognition. Foremost acclaim must go to Professor J. R. Watson who was editor of the first issue in 1917 and who continued to serve in this capacity until his death in 1946. He did much more than edit manuscripts and send them to the publisher. On several occasions, particularly during the 1930's, Professor Watson came to the rescue of the Society and advanced money from his personal funds to make publication of the Florida Entomologist possible. The Pepper Printing Company of Gainesville has printed every issue of The Florida Entomologist. During periods of austerity this company extended credit much beyond reasonable demands and allowed accumulated bills to be paid gradually. Several concerns have helped the Society through the years by taking advertising space in The Florida Entomologist and two of these merit special acknowledgment. The Pepper Printing Company has carried a quarter or half page ad in every issue of the Journal. Tobacco By-Products and Chemical Corporation placed a full page advertisement of their products in the April, 1923, number of The Florida Entomologist and this was continued without breaks until March, 1955, when the company was sold to another concern. Without these benefactors the publication very likely would have gone into oblivion as several entomological journals have done.

With the death of Professor Watson, Associate Editor G. B. Merrill assumed the responsibility of publication of The Florida Entomologist for the remainder of 1946. He was succeeded by Dr. H. K. Wallace who served as editor for three years. The present editor, Dr. Lewis Berner, assumed the position with the first issue of 1950. Under his guidance the Journal has grown in size and increased in quality and prestige. The publication now is received on subscription by 55 libraries in the United States and 29 in foreign countries. In addition there are both domestic and foreign exchanges.

On January 21, 1921, The Florida Entomological Society conferred Honorary Membership upon Doctor Herbert Osborn, Professor Emeritus from Ohio State University, who was loved by all his former students and respected by entomologists everywhere. In following this custom the Society gave like recognition to other distinguished entomologists. These are:

Dr. W. M. Barrows, 1927
Dr. H. T. Fernald, 1927
Dr. L. O. Howard, 1928
Dr. Edith M. Patch, 1940
Dr. Charles T. Brues, 1948
Dr. James G. Needham, 1948

Mr. W. W. Yothers, 1952
Dr. O. A. Johannsen, 1952
Mr. K. E. Bragdon, 1954
Mr. A. C. Brown, 1954
Dr. W. V. King, 1954
Mr. G. B. Merrill, 1957
At the 1959 annual meeting it was announced that the newly instituted Certificates of Honorary Membership had been presented to the five living honorary members, K. E. Bragdon, A. C. Brown, W. V. King, G. B. Merrill and W. W. Yothers.

**LIST OF PAST PRESIDENTS**

**FLORIDA ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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<td>J. R. Watson</td>
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<td>A. N. Tissot</td>
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<td>F. Gray Butcher</td>
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We would like to name and recognize the many members of the Society who through the years have served it so well, by holding office, working on committees or rendering other necessary services. All too often their only reward was the inner satisfaction that comes from doing a job well. Lack of space does not permit such acknowledgement so, on behalf of the Society, we say to all these deserving persons a grateful “Thank You.”

**REFERENCES**


Entomological News. 27: p. 133. 1916.


Minutes of Meetings and other unpublished records of The Florida Entomological Society.

*There is no evidence that an election was held and it is presumed that the officers carried over from 1933.*