

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Christmastime 1882 (Part 2)

Little is known about Christmastime past in Bucklesberry. From old, archived newspapers, though, we have a record of activities that occurred during Christmas back in the day.

Electric lights for Christmas trees, introduced in 1903, and Christmas parades, popularized in the 1920s, were not the news focus of Christmastime in late-nineteenth century rural America. Journalists wrote instead about simple happenings and celebrations of the season.

La Grange townsman, Samuel Ivey (S. I.) Sutton (1834-1904), born and reared in Bucklesberry, was a reporter for several local newspapers during the decade of the 1880s. He observed the kickoff to Christmas in 1882:

1882, December 20: "Christmas opened in town [La Grange] on the 12th. Dance on Tuesday night, another on Wednesday night...." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

The days leading up to Christmas week that year appeared to be free of harsh weather for Bucklesberrians who had money to spend on gifts in the big city of Goldsboro:

1882, December 21: "It is not often that Christmas shopping can be carried on so comfortably as in the pleasant weather of the last few days. The season has not been a remarkably active one, but as Christmas approaches the crowds in the stores increase, and front street and other stores of retail trade take on a holiday appearance....So far the weather has been most favorable for the holiday trade." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

The Christmas shopping days of 1882 were not unseasonably warm, however. In neighboring Onslow County, temperatures before Christmas week were apparently frigid, which the Bucklesberry community probably felt as well:

1882, December 21: "Terrible cold weather for the last week; changed a little now, and things look better. Can't do much work out. The farmers in our section are about done gathering their crops. Some few are not done picking cotton." (*New Berne Weekly Journal*)

Interestingly, the comfortable shopping days of Christmas week were preceded by an extraordinary winter event. On Sunday, December 17, 1882, white stuff fell in Bucklesberry and the surrounding area. The snow may have lingered for a rare white Christmas, as reported by S. I. Sutton on Christmas Eve Day:

1882, December 24: "A nice snow fell on Sunday night [December 17]...." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

S. I.'s final news post for Christmas 1882 centered on some of the same things that concern us at Christmastime today—school closings, support for local merchants, coming home for Christmas, and celebrating heartily and responsibly:

1882, December 24: "The schools of this place close their Fall Sessions this week.... A box of fine oranges, fresh from Florida, by our former townsman, C. L. Koonce, was to be seen at the store of Edwards & Murchison [La Grange] last Wednesday. They were very fine; one weighed fifteen ounces...I learn that several [students]...from the University and other schools will be at home this week. A number of most excellent young ladies and gentlemen have left this place for the different schools, and their return is very much enjoyed by relatives and friends....'Christmas comes but once a year....give all plenty of whisky, eggnog, lager, roast turkey, etc., and let's have fight, fun and frolic for a few days at least.'" (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

Amidst all the Christmas festivities in 1882, Bucklesberrians surely acknowledged the Reason for the season—the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. So we do to this day.