

# Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

## Dempsey E. Wood (Part 12)

A man who lived life to the fullest, Dempsey Eugene Wood (1847-1921) had an unquenchable passion for the outdoors. He was a crack shot hunter and champion fisherman. But fun and leisure did not rob Dempsey of a strong work ethic.

Born and reared in Bucklesberry, farming was an integral part of Dempsey's roots. With land he inherited from his grandfather, John Sutton (1779-1858), and father, James Wood (1815-1875), Dempsey farmed admirably until his retirement in 1906.

Farming alone, however, was not enough to make his career complete. Dempsey also enjoyed politics and was elected to the State House of Representatives in 1883-1884. His greatest work legacy, though, may have been in the business arena.

As a young man, Dempsey showed a knack for business when he developed a novel idea for keeping razors sharp, although the nature of his invention is unknown:

1879, July 31: "Jerry (Jeremiah, Sr.) Sutton says Dempsey Wood, Jr. has invented a new way of sharpening razors—thinks he ought to get a patent on it." (*Kinston Journal*)

By the next year, Dempsey and his uncle, Jeremiah Sutton, Sr. (1836-1900), youngest brother of his mother, Elizabeth (Betsy) Sutton Wood (1829-1849), had bonded in business and purchased a fishing operation in Bucklesberry:

1880, March 29: "La Grange *Review*: Messrs. Jerry [Jeremiah, Sr.] Sutton and Dempsey Wood, Jr., have bought a fishing establishment on Neuse River near Pine Bush [landing]." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

1880, April 8: "Dempsey Wood, Jr., gave us on Saturday a sketch of his fishing operation at the new seine beach opened by him and Jerry (Jeremiah, Sr.) Sutton, referred to in the *La Grange Review* two weeks ago. He said on Monday Dr. Kennedy of Pamlico, Jake Harper, Claude Kennedy, Jerry [Jeremiah Sutton, Sr.] and himself had a 'beach stew' and destroyed four large roe shad. If that crowd of gourmands make many visits to the beach, brother [Rev. B. W.] Nash had as well make up his mind to get no shad this year." (*Kinston Journal*)

Jack Randall Sutton, current Bucklesberry resident and grandson of Jeremiah, Sr., believes the fishery was located on a sandbar between Hardy Bridge and Pine Bush Landing. Whether it was on the north or south side of the River, however, is unknown.

By the end of the 1880s, Dempsey's business aptitude had catapulted him to the board of directors of the influential Atlantic and North Carolina (A&NC) Railroad, a position he held until the day he died:

1889, March 12: "Dempsey Wood, Esq., of Lenoir [County], a director of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad, was in the city [Wilmington] last evening." (*Wilmington Messenger*)

More about Dempsey's service on the A&NC Railroad board will be shared in next week's Bucklesberry article.