

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Hickory Grove Church (Part 26)

The most significant and protracted legal case in the history of Bucklesberry centered on Hickory Grove Church. Rev. Bushrod Washington (B. W.) Nash, agent of the Union Baptist Association, filed a first suit against Church trustees in 1889, followed by four additional suits from 1891 to 1896. Rev. Nash's descendants filed a sixth and final suit in 1898 that was eventually settled in 1910.

All totaled, the case spanned more than twenty years. Each suit claimed the Church did not own its building and property because trustees had deeded it to the Union Baptist Association years earlier in 1872. From start to finish, it was a turbulent and crippling time for Bucklesberry's first church that took its toll on their ability to minister fully to members and the community.

The most detailed of the six complaints was the third suit of 1892. Last week's Bucklesberry article included the third, fourth and fifth points of the seven-point claim. Below are the final two points:

"6. That on the 14th day of April A. D. 1883 the members of the Hickory Grove Baptist Church by the mutual agreement and consent of each other, and by and through their proper agent and representatives, in convention assembled at Thunder Swamp Baptist Church in the County of Wayne North Carolina, and by mutual agreement consent and concurrence of other Baptist churches became members of the Union Baptist Association, and by act and proceedings became part and parcel of said Association agreeably to and subject to the laws of said Association and that after that time to wit: on or about the 6th day of October 1883 the said Baptist church at Hickory Grove at the first Annual Session of the Union Baptist Association held at the said Hickory Grove Church, through its proper representatives ratified and agreed to the Constitution Articles of faith Rules of order and Bylaws governing the Union Baptist Association and all the churches comprising and composing the same."

"7. That on the ___ day of ___ 1884 the Defendants B. F. Sutton, Jr., S. I. Sutton, Jerre [Jeremiah, Sr.] Sutton, Thomas Sutton, and Levi Hill, did contrary to their most solemn covenants and agreements contrary to their trust, contrary to law, wrongfully violently and unlawfully abuse[d] their most solemn trust as trustees of the Baptist Church at Hickory Grove by violently and unlawfully leaving out and excluding the members of said Church from the lawful use and privileges, and did unlawfully seize, take, and render possession of the said Hickory Grove Baptist Church building and lot, and did unlawfully connive with aid and abet, and make attainment of said Hickory Grove Baptist Church building and lot unto the Methodist Protestant

Church or denomination, as this Plaintiff believes, for the purpose of and intent to hinder, defeat, and defraud the members of the Baptist Church from the lawful use and benefit of the same, and this Plaintiff is informed and believes that the said Defendants do so now hold and keep contrary to law and their trust, said Hickory Grove Baptist Church building and lot for the use and benefit of the Methodist Protestant Church or denomination to the hurt and damage of the Baptist Church at Hickory Grove, and the members of the Union Baptist Association and to this Plaintiff as trustee and owner thereof." (*North Carolina Archives*, Raleigh)

The third suit was litigated before Judge Herbert Graves Connor in the May, 1893 term of the Lenoir County Superior Court. An upcoming Bucklesberry article will share the ruling.