

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Labor Day 1885

Not as festive as Christmas or as dazzling as New Year's, nor is the food as scrumptious as Thanksgiving. Nonetheless, Labor Day is among the lineup of holidays we celebrate every year. Always the first Monday in September, President Grover Cleveland signed a law declaring Labor Day a national holiday in 1894 in recognition of the American worker.

Almost a decade before the holiday was established, Samuel Ivey (S. I.) Sutton (1834-1904) reported happenings in Bucklesberry and greater La Grange on what would have been Labor Day week, 1885 (September 7). Aside from illnesses, which could have been aggravated by grueling farm work, the news at the time reflected lots of labor among folks in the community:

1885, September 9: "Work has been commenced on Col. Davis' 'Mess Hall.' This building will be quite a large one when completed. A[ndrew] J[ackson] Sutton, who intends [on] doing business in this place, left for Baltimore Monday to purchase his stock of goods. Shade Wooten and E. W. Bizzell returned from Baltimore Saturday. Their stock of goods will follow in a few days. W. S. Uzzell, who has been sick for some time, was in town Monday, much improved, though not entirely recovered. Judge W. T. Faircloth and lady visited C. S. and S. I. Wooten last week, and returned to their home in Goldsboro Monday.... We are glad to hear that Lonnie Moore, who has been suffering for three or four weeks from a severe abscess, is rapidly improving.... Church services at the usual place last Sunday by Rev. Mr. Isler, and at the Primitive Baptist Church by Revs. Mr. Taylor and Woodard. Capt. J. W. Rice has a tobacco farm of several acres, and is receiving flues preparatory to curing. We hope to see this crop receive more attention, as it is said to be a paying one.... We are glad to see many who were quite sick a few days ago so much improved as to be out. Our community has been very sickly this season, but we think it improving in health now.... Several cases of sickness in Bucklesberry last week. This section has been comparatively free up to that time. We are glad to know that most of them are doing as well as could be expected. Sim[eon] Wooten will, in a few days, open a new millinery store in our town. Miss Jesse Webb of Baltimore arrived last week and will have charge. The goods are here and will be opened in a few days. We learn that J. T. Aldridge and James Aldridge will open a store in the wood building of Sim[eon] Wooten shortly. The owners of unimproved lots will have to build up, to supply the demand. Two bales of cotton, the first this season, were sold here Saturday at 9 cents Simeon Wooten being the purchaser. By the way, we see that the first bale sold in your city [New Bern] came from our town. The weather is pleasant. The rains have been favorable, but not very plentiful. The crops have improved where not too far gone. Rice has come out considerably, but a full crop can't be looked for. The ginners are getting their gins in order for work. Cotton picking is going on, and our streets are not so well supplied with those out

of employment. The cotton picking season furnishes to many who are otherwise unemployed. We expect La Grange to put on its best in the cotton market this year. Several new buyers, and we learn that we are to have some, ought to give the farmers the top of the market. It is to the interest of business men to encourage the produce in their towns, for where the farmer sells there he will spend a part of his sales....New life and activity are to be plainly seen in our village. The beginning of our schools always brings this. In this connection, we are glad to say the prospects for a large attendance at these institutions are better than at previous sessions. Col. Davis informs us that the opening at his school [Davis Military Academy] was very satisfactory, and we learn that Collegiate Institute is getting good patronage and doing first-rate. The new school building of Col. Davis is nearing completion, and when done will be among the handsomest and best furnished in the State." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)