

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Harper's Landing (Part 3)

Harper's Landing is possibly the most well referenced landmark in Bucklesberry. Through the early 1900s, it was an important Neuse River terminal for steamboats and other vessels that transported cargo and passengers in and out of Bucklesberry.

The Landing bears the name of the Harper family who moved to Bucklesberry in the mid-1800s. James Madison Harper (1809-1858) and wife Charlotte Elizabeth Parrott Harper (1815-1879) were listed as residents of Lenoir County in the 1850 Census. The next 1860 Census placed them in the Bear Creek (Bucklesberry) District of the County.

Census takers numbered and recorded dwellings in order of visitation. Neighbors living in close proximity to each other, then, would have consecutive or close house numbers. One of the neighboring households to the Harpers in the 1860 Census was James Wood (1815-1875) and wife Lucetta (Wood) Wood (1830-1876).

Confirmation that the Harpers and Woods were neighbors is significant in that it pinpointed the location of James' and Charlotte's residence in proximity to Harper's Landing. Specifically, the Dempsey Wood House, still standing today, is located on the east side of Bucklesberry in the Pot Neck area just off Kennedy Home Road where it curves sharply in a northeasterly direction.

James Wood began building his two-story house before the 1850s when he was married to first wife Elizabeth (Betsy) Sutton Wood (1829-1850). Two of their sons, Dempsey Eugene Wood (1847-1921) and Jesse Wood (1845-1911) lived in the house until 1892. Known now as the Dempsey Wood House, the architecturally ornate structure was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1971. Current owners are James and Janet Lambert.

About a mile south of the sharp curve on Kennedy Home Road and approximately a half mile east of the Dempsey Wood House, Harper's Landing is situated on the banks of the Neuse River. So, James' and Charlotte's dwelling and plantation were probably within a mile or so from the Woods' house.

Charlotte Harper survived her husband by more than twenty years. Her will dated 1871 indicated their plantation was in the same vicinity as other neighbors who lived near Harper's Landing and owned land along Kennedy Home Road:

"I give and devise to my executor hereinafter named [James M. Harper, Jr.] my tract of land lying in Lenoir County adjoining the lands of William Kennedy, Noah Rouse [Jr.], Jesse Wood, and others..." (*USGenWeb Archives*, Francis R. Hodges, PhD, contributor, August 2000).

The 1,200-acre plantation owned by Confederate Army Capt. William Lafayette Kennedy (1845-1929) and wife Emily Hardee Kennedy (1853-1918) was located on Kennedy Home Road just a few miles from Harper's Landing. The family eventually donated this swath of land to the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina that now comprises Kennedy Home for Children.

In addition to sharing adjoining lands, the Harper and Rouse families intermingled. Noah Rouse, Jr. (1830-1897) married Mary Eliza Harper (1838-1897), daughter of James and Charlotte Harper. Interestingly, Noah's and Mary's son Noah James Rouse (1861-1935) purchased the Dempsey Wood House in 1892.