

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

C. S. Wooten Reflections (Part 3)

Council Simmons Wooten (1840–1930) was a lawyer and prolific writer. In an 1886 issue of the *Goldsboro Messenger*, he wrote a lengthy, front page news story about Bucklesberry and the Sutton family, for whom he had great respect and admiration. Reprints of Parts 1 and 2 of Wooten’s reflections were provided in previous issues of the *Gazette*. The final Part 3 of Wooten’s original article titled, *Bucklesberry: Some Interesting Notes from Lenoir County*, is reprinted below:

“I must now pay my respects to my good friend, Jeremiah Sutton [1836–1905], for I can’t forget him when he treated me so royally when there. Recently at his request I went to his home to do some legal business for him. Before dinner he brought out some apple brandy three years old, made from the little wild black grape, which, by-the-way, makes the best wine in the world. It was made by taking three gallons of the grape juice and one gallon of brandy.”

“Our older people will recollect that in the old times, this was the only way of making wine. As I gave my little girl some it was a real treat to see her sip it and smack her lips with all the airs of a Connoisseur, and say “Pap, ain’t it good?” I certainly agreed with her. I was puzzled to tell which was best, for they were both so good that I would sip first one and then the other.”

“Now my prohibition friends must not censure me for giving the little girl some wine and toddy, for bless the dear little creature, I never saw one that did not love it and smack her lips and say it was good. It is cruel, puritanical and hard hearted not to let the little ones have some, when we grown people will step in at the back door and get behind screens to take a drink. Horace may sing of the good old mellow wines of Greece and Rome, but I will sing of the Bucklesberry wines made by Jeremiah Sutton for that is good enough for me.”

“I must stop writing about this good wine and brandy, for my mouth is just watering for a drink of it, and my dinner is now ready and I will have to content myself with a drink of upcountry corn whiskey.”

“Soon dinner was announced and such a quantity of good things one rarely sees on one table. There was turkey, chicken pie, ham and barbecue to say nothing of the vegetables and dessert, and there were no small quantities either. There were large, old fashioned dishes three feet long, and every one was brimming full. I venture the assertion that there was enough to feed 50 men on the table.”

“After dinner was over, he asked me what was my fee for the work I had done. I told him I was fully paid, that I had eaten dinner enough to last me a week and that I thought that was full

compensation. I will put the question to my brethren of the bar, that if they could make enough in one day to support them for a week if they would not think that a good day's work."

"Not long ago while returning from this goodly land, this modern Egypt, where the needy and hungry, as in olden times, have to resort to get something to eat, I passed a gentleman from the piney woods region, standing on the road in front of John A. Sutton's [1840-1915] house. He had just eaten dinner with friend Sutton. If he ate as much as he looked like he could hold, I am sorry for the host, for provisions ought to go up at that house. He looked as full and tight as a tick and if anybody had poked him in the side I think there would have been an explosion. I was momentarily expecting it to result from spontaneous combustion during the process of digestion, when the "hotch potch" inside of him began to ferment."

"Oh! How I do pity my Bucklesberry friends when a lean, lank, cadaverous and half starved piney woods man goes among them and sits down to one of their tables cracking under the heavy load of good things thereon. These hungry fellows may go to Bucklesberry and give loose rein to their appetites and try to eat out the "substance of the people" but they can't do it, and these Bucklesberry farmers will just laugh at them, and tell them to help themselves, for there is the greatest abundance in this land of plenty."

"There is no country that is blessed with a more fruitful soil or a more generous and hospitable people, or fanned by softer breezes, or canopied by a purer sky than the goodly land of Bucklesberry."

C. S. Wooten
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