

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Educated Farmers (Part 2)

The world population is estimated to be ten billion by 2050. "With that many mouths to feed," argued Karn Manhas, founder and CEO of Terramera.com, an agbiotech company, "Farming may well be the most important job on the planet," (para. 2). Given the billions that must be fed, he added, "It's hard to think of a career that's more important for our collective survival," (para. 16).

The importance of farmers worldwide, including Bucklesberry and greater La Grange, must never be taken for granted or undervalued. They are needed as much now, perhaps more, than when they settled the rough terrain of this old community in the 1700s.

Beyond a mere occupation, farming is the world's oldest profession. To be respected as such, it is rooted in research-based agricultural science. The increasing integration of farming and technology compels farmers today to be well-educated beyond the high school level.

When American education was in its infancy in the late nineteenth century, only elementary-level grammar schools were available in farm communities. Not until 1907 did the State General Assembly authorize establishment of rural high schools. Thus, a basic education for farmers was the appeal of the North Carolina Grange Committee on Education held in Tarboro, NC, in December 1887. Continued here is a reprint of their report:

"There are natural laws pertaining to the growth of plants. The operation of those laws should not be strange to the farmer who has most use for understanding them. The preparation of the soil, the planting of the seeds, the cultivation of the plants and the harvesting of the grain ought to be performed intelligently to be enjoyed. To plow, to sow, to hoe, to reap, to mow, to do all these intelligently, fully comprehending the reasons for each operation would be to create new interest in farming and elevate the occupation to the lofty position of a science, the position to which it of right belongs."

"The science of agriculture, then, should form a part of a farmer's daily study. He should accustom himself to making notes of the various stages of plant growth, particularly noting the favorable and unfavorable circumstances. The habit of writing down the causes favoring and or not favoring the highest development of plants would cultivate the faculty of observation. A habit of close observation once formed would be in itself a strong educating power, lifting the farmer from the dull routine practiced by his ancestors to the higher plane to which the science of

agriculture should rise as the country begins to put off its primitive costume for that of higher civilization."

"But the studying of the natural laws pertaining to the farm is not all that deserves the attention of farmers. Selling and buying are as much the duties of farmers as are planting and cultivating. The paying of taxes is just as essential as the gathering of grain. Hence, to do those things intelligently farmers should study the principals [sic.] underlying trade and commerce. They should make a close study of the principles of economic science. They cannot remain ignorant of these objects without loss to themselves; therefore, to study them should be a business just as much so as to study any other subject relating to their prosperity."

"As farmers become more intelligent, the impositions they [have] had to endure pass away one after another." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern, January 13, 1888)

More from this report will be shared in upcoming an Bucklesberry article.