

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Educated Farmers (Part 3)

The Moseley Hall Grange No. 26 was reorganized in May, 1887. Among the officers from Bucklesberry and La Grange were secretary Dallas Mifflin Stanton (1847-1913), lecturer Benjamin Franklin Sutton (1838-1897), gate keeper Thomas Sutton (1826-1894), and overseer Shadrach Isler Wooten (1845-1904).

Seven months later in December 1887, the State Grange Committee on Education met in Tarboro, NC. Their widely published report made one of the first pitches for the proper education of farmers.

The message of this report took root and has resonated across generations. Today, many farmers and their children pursue post-secondary education and complete college degrees in agricultural science and related fields. Reprinted here is the conclusion of the Committee's report:

"When our noble Order first came into existence the cause of agriculture was suffering from the weight of heavy burdens brought to bear upon it by other departments and classes in their scramble for money getting. The education of the farmer through the Grange has opened his eyes to the evils that beset him. And now as he has become more intelligent the forces that were arrayed against are beginning to break."

"It is to education that we must look for emancipation from the chains by which the ignorant are ever bound. It is education that will enable us to see our wants and to apply the remedy for the ills with which the cause of agriculture is afflicted. It becomes us, therefore, to pay increased attention to the matter of education. Wherever there is a Grange, let there be a school. The Grange and the school should grow together. The farmer should be an intelligent citizen, and his children should be prepared intellectually to succeed him."

"Without education there would be no hope for the farmer. He would continue to be flattered by the appellation of the 'horny handed son of toil,' but his rights would be disregarded in the interests of those who might be disposed to take advantage of his ignorance. If he sells and buys without a just understanding of what constitutes fair prices, he does it at his financial peril. He votes and then pays taxes in accordance with the principles which he supported at the ballot box. If he votes ignorantly he may cast his ballot in opposition to what constitutes his rights as well as interests. By his own actions he may bring burdens upon himself which do not of right belong to him, and will find his business suffering without seeing or knowing the cause and applying the remedy."

"The age is one of preeminent intellectual activity. Each class into which our population is divided is more or less interested in gaining intellectual supremacy. The farmer must not retire from the contest. If he does, his occupation will sink in the scales of respectability, in which case, the cause of agriculture will be attended by a slavery as galling as that of the feudal ages."

"The farmer must be educated. He cannot afford to be ignorant. The Grange must use every honorable means within its power to bring about the desired result. If the organization fails in this work, it will prove itself worthless. The circulation and reading of books and literature on every important subject pertaining to the farm, the home, the community, the State, the government should be recommended and encouraged. Every Grange ought to be a social, reading, debating and business organization all combined."

"When people begin to read, they begin to think. When they begin to think, they begin to reason. Hence, the Grange should be particularly interested in carrying on the work of education. We as Patrons of Husbandry should encourage a more thorough and diffused education among all classes. A Husbandman needs education, most thorough and general, his business dealings being most diversified. What we want is to place every farmer on a higher plane." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern, January 13, 1888)