

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Glimpse in Time 1873: Growth

Bucklesberry and La Grange got the attention of journalists in 1873. An online search identified three eastern N.C. newspapers that published brief reports about the community: *Gazette* (Kinston); *Goldsboro Messenger*; and *The Wilmington Morning Star*.

One topic of interest that year was the extreme weather. February 1873 turned out to be a real drencher. The average of more than nine inches of rainfall that month across the State exceeded the average rainfall by some three inches for any other February since 1820.

Also reported by news outlets in 1873 was the condition of the crops. A hard frost in late May badly damaged the corn and cotton. What appeared to be a recovering cotton crop in June resulted in a devastating one-third loss by year's end, due to lingering rain.

Although it was a painfully lean year for crops, other news reports published in 1873 suggest that greater La Grange was experiencing growing pains in commerce:

June 26: "The following persons are doing a good business, I would suppose, in dry-goods and groceries: C. G. Grady & Co., J. G. Nettles & Co., Edwards & Murchison (Messrs. E. & M. were formerly located at Falling Creek, in this County, but have built a larger and better house and removed to this place recently)—and J. L. Hardee & Son. Messrs. Hardee & Son have the largest establishment in this place. Croom & Hardy deal in groceries, Dillon & Stanton dry-goods, Mr. I. Sutton, Fields & Spence, Rice & McClenny, in dry-goods. S. B. Parker & Co., in confectioneries..." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

Old documents in the Clellan Sutton Collection vouch that Bucklesberry folks were doing business with local merchants. But not everyone had convenient access to services and goods in La Grange. Folks across Neuse River were isolated:

July 17: "The want of a free passage across Neuse River at Carters Landing is greatly felt, not only by the business men of this place, but also, by farmers and others living on the south side of the River, who would come here to dispose of their cotton and other produce and purchase their supplies, if they could do so without paying ferryage every time, but as they cannot, they go to other points, farther from their homes, and where they can do their trading to no better advantage than they can here..." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

Carter's Landing was in the vicinity of Trotter's Creek, directly off of the current Davis-Hardy Road. Another decade would pass before county commissioners appropriated \$500 in 1882 to begin the construction of Hardy Bridge.

Conveying produce by waterway was also a problem in 1873. Farmers in Bucklesberry, and as far west as Goldsboro, were unable to transport fruit, vegetables, cotton, and other goods by steamship on the Neuse River:

September 25: "The Steamer '*Caswell*,' we are glad to hear, is making regular trips from Kinston to Newbern, carrying cotton and other products. Wish the '*Caswell*' could extend her trips as high up as Goldsboro. Congress might make an appropriation to defray the expense of cleaning out the Neuse, and our friends along the River would do well to get up petitions to that effect. It will cost nothing to try, and our Representatives, Thomas and Smith, aided by Senators Merrimon and Ranson, would doubtless do all in their power to obtain the appropriation." (*Goldsboro Messenger*)

As with the bridge, Bucklesberry residents had to wait awhile longer before steamship service would become available. Although the steamer *Caswell* had retired in Kinston by 1879, the steamer *Neuse* was making routes to the Bucklesberry community by 1882, and the steamer *Kinston* was traversing the River by 1885.

Despite the greatly needed growth, locals felt the pinch of taxation in 1873. On September 18, the *Goldsboro Messenger* reported, "The farmers of Lenoir complain of being outrageously taxed by the County Commissioners."

Our ancestors learned back then, as we do today, that there is no free ride in this life. You typically get what you pay for, as one local Bucklesberry farmer used to say.