

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Steamer *Kinston* 1883

Steamboats were seen routinely up and down the Neuse River in the late 1800s. They served both recreational and commercial purposes. Folks would take leisurely trips on steamers much like people take vacations on cruise ships today.

Farmers also used steamers to transport crops, vegetables, and other products for sale on the market and for receiving supplies. Not until the early 1900s would steamers be replaced by truckers and the expanding railway for transporting goods.

The hub for much of the commerce back then was New Bern. Steamers originated there and traveled up the Neuse River beyond Kinston into greater Bucklesberry, which at the time stretched from Falling Creek to Seven Springs (or White Hall). Eventually, steamers made it up the Neuse into the Goldsboro area.

By 1883, six steamers serviced New Bern merchants in transporting cargo and passengers to and from inland towns and communities along the Neuse and Trent Rivers. The steamers were named *Cutler*, *Elm City*, *Florence*, *Kinston*, *Snow Hill*, and *Trent*.

The steamer *Kinston* was described as "the largest boat ever on the Neuse; her length is 122 feet, width 26 feet and when loaded she draws about 2 feet water. She is a freight boat but her upper deck is nicely arranged for the accommodation of passengers; the rooms are nicely painted, with the floor well carpeted, nice furniture and plenty of something good to eat...." (*Goldsboro Messenger*, April 12, 1883)

Much of the reporting on steamboat activity along the Neuse River in Bucklesberry and Seven Springs during 1883 centered on the steamer *Kinston*:

1883, January 27: "The steamer *Kinston* brought down [to New Bern] on Thursday night the following gentlemen from Bucklesberry, Lenoir County: Messrs. Benj[amin]. F. Sutton, Julius Sutton, Junius Sutton, J. J. Barwick, D. Wood, William Jones, Alonzo Rouse and Joel Elmore. They brought along a lot of seventy bales of nice cotton which topped the market, bringing 9.45, without any corresponding advance in the New York and Liverpool markets. Their cotton was not only good, but was in good condition, nicely packed, heavy bales. They paid their respects to the JOURNAL office while in the city, and we hope they have found it to their interest to visit New Berne again. Wright Lassitter, a colored farmer from the same neighborhood, was also along with cotton. They all return on the *Kinston* today well pleased with the trip." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1883, February 10: "The steamer *Kinston* carried up a full cargo of freights yesterday evening for Kinston and White Hall. She makes regular trips to the latter point now." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1883, April 11: "Mr. Emanuel Jarman, of Bucklesberry, Lenoir County, was in the city on Tuesday, having brought down fourteen bales of cotton on the steamer *Kinston* on Monday night. As is usually the case with cotton from this neighborhood, Mr. Jarman led the market, selling his lot for 9.80 through." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1883, April 14: "The citizens of this place [Seven Springs] enjoyed quite a treat on Sunday last through the kindness of Captain Dixon of the steamer *Kinston*, who gave us a free excursion up the [Neuse] River. The varied scenery along the banks made one almost believe he was sailing on the historical Hudson or traversing the picturesque waters of the upper Kennebec. When the boat had ascended as high as Arrington's bridge all hands went ashore for dinner, and such a feast was hardly ever before spread out on the bosom of old mother earth. When the inner man was satisfied the boat returned on its downward trip. The young ladies and gentlemen, not unmindful of the holy Sabbath, cheered us on the way with the sweetest of sacred song that ever reverberated along the shores of old Neuse, and one would have believed that a whole camp meeting was moving majestically down the River. Capt. Dixon and Lieut. Taylor have endeared themselves to our people for their kindness and very polite attention to all on board." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

Next week's article will share more news reports on the steamer *Kinston* and its activities along the Neuse in 1883.