

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Dempsey E. Wood (Part 3)

Regarded as an outgoing person with an attractive sense of humor, Dempsey Eugene Wood (1847-1921) was a respected farmer who lived most of his life in Bucklesberry. Accomplished businessman and State politician, Dempsey was also a well-known sportsman.

Newspapers often reported on Dempsey's outdoor activities. Among his earliest interests was horse racing. As a young man in his thirties, Dempsey purchased a winning steed:

1879, June 26: "Dempsey Wood, Jr., has recently bought a very fine horse from Wynne at Raleigh. He had a trotting match last week with Joe Lasitter and made the mile in about three minutes." (*Kinston Journal*)

The jockeys had a rematch two years later. Although Lasitter operated a stable in Kinston, suggesting he might have had his pick of better race horses, Dempsey's horse once more outpaced his opponent:

1881, May 5: "Jolly Col. Carroway, traveling correspondent of the [*News and*] *Observer*, tells of a [horse] race at Kinston, between 'Lager Beer' entered by Joe Lasitter, and 'Prohibition' entered by Dempsey Wood. Lager got half a mile start, but Prohibition unlimbered himself and won the election by a large majority." (*The Farmer and Mechanic*, Raleigh)

Dempsey also enjoyed hunting. Blessed with a good eye and skilled at handling guns, he was widely recognized as a crack shot and expert marksman:

1880, January 8: "We learn that three of our Bucklesberry neighbors—W. L. Kennedy, A. T. Kennedy and D[empsey] Wood, Jr....killed 175 birds in one hunt....it was pretty sharp shooting." (*Kinston Journal*)

1880, December 9: "Our townsman, W. C. Moore has recently bought an \$80 Parker gun, W. L. Kennedy, of Falling Creek one for \$125, and Dempsey Wood, Jr., one for \$75. These gentlemen are perhaps the best sportsmen in the County, Mr. Wood being sometimes called the 'champion wing shot of Lenoir [County]'!.... " (*Kinston Journal*)

1893, January 21: "Messrs. W. L. Kennedy and Dempsey Wood, crack shots of Lenoir County, killed 25 mallards in one day's hunt." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1895, February 7: "Dempsey Wood, of Falling Creek, came up on a hunting trip for a few days last week. He had some very good shooting." (*Goldsboro Headlight*)

Dempsey hunted locally, but he also went on extended hunting trips outside the area, including the mountains:

1884, October 1: "Dempsey Wood, the Bucklesberry sportsman, left here for the mountains of Virginia, Monday. He will be absent for some fifteen days, in which time he will kill a number of deer, etc., more or less." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1885, November 4: "Dempsey Wood returned from a mountain hunting trip last week, and brought home some of the fruits of his labor. We saw several pheasants, and Dempsey assured us he had a leg of venison along." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

In addition to horse racing and hunting, Dempsey was an avid fisherman, the focus of next week's Bucklesberry article.