

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Hickory Grove Church (Part 7)

From its founding in 1860, Bucklesberry's first local church operated under the Baptist banner. But on September 27, 1884, the congregation voted to withdraw Hickory Grove Church from the Union Baptist Association.

Former pastor and editor of the Baptist newspaper, Rev. Bushrod Washington (B. W.) Nash, questioned the Church's historic action. He received an immediate, public response from news reporter, Samuel Ivey (S. I.) Sutton (1834-1904) of Bucklesberry, who spoke on behalf of the Church:

1884, October 25: "The editorial part of the *Baptist Review* [i.e., Rev. Nash] was here Tuesday, enquiring after the doings of the Hickory Grove Church last Saturday, we learn. For the information of those who appear to feel so much for the Church, we think we are authorized to say that the Church at that place [Bucklesberry] will take care of itself, and at the same time not injure anyone else." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

Withdrawal from the Association did not mean Hickory Grove had rejected Baptist doctrine. Although the Church was reportedly without denominational affiliation, it nonetheless continued to operate as a Baptist ministry, absent external governance and oversight:

1884, November 5: "The Independent Baptist Church at Hickory Grove met last Sunday to arrange for ministerial services, the Church being without a minister. A motion was adopted, requesting the Missionary Baptist Association, the M. E. [Methodist Episcopal] Conference and M. P. [Methodist Protestant, South] Conference, to supply the Church with preaching once a month, or as often as they can..." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

As directed by the Church, pulpiteers representing varying denominations conducted worship services at Hickory Grove through the end of the year:

1884, November 19: "Rev. Mr. [J. D.] Carpenter preached here last Sunday and Sunday night—his regular appointment. He filled his appointment at Hickory Grove at 3 1/2 o'clock p.m." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern). Note: Rev. Carpenter was with the M. E. Church, South.

1884, November 26: "Rev. Mr. [A. J.] Hiers preached at the Baptist church here [La Grange] Sunday. No service Sunday night. He will preach at Hickory Grove the fourth Sunday in December, at 8 o'clock p.m." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern). Note: Rev. Hiers was the pastor of

the Missionary Baptist Church in La Grange at the time and was allied with the Union Baptist Association.

1884, December 5: "Rev. B. W. Nash expects to preach at Hickory Grove, in Lenoir County, on the 4th Sabbath in this month. The Church and citizens of that community are requested to attend." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1884, December 10: "Rev. Daniel Davis, of the Free Will Baptist Church, preached at Hickory Grove last Sunday. Text: 1st Kings, 10th chapter, 19th verse. "The throne had six steps." We remember hearing Mr. Davis some years ago at Hood Swamp [Free Will Baptist Church]. His effort at Hickory Grove last Sunday, we presume, will not be regarded as a masterly one." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)

1884, December 31: "In accordance with an invitation extended by the Church at Hickory Grove, Rev. W. E. Swain, of the M. P. Church, will preach at that place the first Sunday in each month, at 11 o'clock a.m., beginning the first Sunday in February, 1885. The members of the Church and Christians, and people in the community, are cordially invited." (*The Daily Journal*, New Bern)