

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Lillian Sutton Perry (Part 19)

To Lillian Sutton Perry (1864-1946), motherhood was the most important role in her life. Even when her husband, Daniel Elijah Perry (1857-1897) died prematurely, and she became head of household, she remained laser-focused on caring for their five small children.

Nonetheless, Lillian had the additional responsibility of overseeing family business, specifically, management of real property. Included was the ongoing operation of multiple farms as well as the rental, purchase and sale of other properties.

On occasion, it became demanding and complex. For example, in 1916 the Norfolk Southern Railroad alleged that Lillian and several others were squatting on sections of railroad property in Kinston. Legal proceedings ensued. Fortunately, the matter was settled to the satisfaction of all parties without a protracted court battle:

1916, March 31: "The now famous Norfolk Southern right-of-way matter...has been settled out of court....A separate agreement was arrived at between counsel for the railroad and each of the individuals involved, holding property claimed by the Northern Southern between the East Street and 'the Junction,' in East Kinston, a distance of about a block....The railroad company claimed that ground for 100 feet on either side from the center of the main line track was rightfully its property from grants made generations ago, but that forbears of the persons made defendants by a bill of equity issued in the matter had squatted upon it and been allowed to retain it, until such time as the railroad should need it. Rather than fight the case, however, chancing thereby bad feeling on the part of the individuals and causing some of them outright serious embarrassment, since the Norfolk Southern claimed to be confident of the outcome of the proposed litigation, the company sought to 'adjust' the matter, and succeeded in doing so 'satisfactorily'....Mrs. Lillian Perry...on the west...[is one of] the individuals interested. [Total] 'Damages' approximating about \$4,600 were agreed upon by the railroad....Three houses owned by Mrs. Perry...will be accommodated easily on [her] abridged lots, after being moved..." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

As for other real estate, one of the most interesting transactions that occurred on Lillian's watch may have been the 1917 purchase of J. C. Rasberry's storefront building in downtown Kinston:

1917, March 7: "Realty Transfers...J. C. Rasberry to Mrs. Lillian Perry, Queen Street building and lot, \$8,000, by deed." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

Relatively new when she bought it, the building permit for Rasberry's store was issued in 1914. "Among the more important building operations," his store joined other constructions in-progress that year, including "the new First Baptist church, the new [Kinston] high school...the Hughes Tobacco Company's factory, [and] the Hines Bros.' Theatre..." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston, August 18, 1914).

Joseph Conklin Rasberry, Sr. (1877-1941) was a well-known, affluent businessman in Kinston. At the time he sold his building to Lillian, he was general agent for the Eastern North Carolina region of the Volunteer State Life Insurance Company headquartered in Chattanooga, TN.