

Bucklesberry, Back in the Day

Harper's Landing (Part 4)

The Neuse River was a lifeline for rural neighborhoods like Bucklesberry during the 1800s and early 1900s. Steamboats paddled up and down her waterway transporting crops, supplies and passengers in and out of the community.

Harper's Landing was one of several water terminals in Bucklesberry. Located in the Pot Neck section, it was about a mile south of the sharp curve on Kennedy Home Road to the banks of the Neuse River. The landing bears the name of plantation owners James Madison Harper (1809-1858) and wife Charlotte Elizabeth Parrott Harper (1815-1879) who were living in the area by 1850.

A local resident, formerly employed with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the early 1980s, witnessed Harper's Landing. He estimated the distance from the top of the landing to the surface of the water to be about twenty feet or more on a typical day.

Several published records documented activity at Harper's Landing, signifying its commercial and recreational importance. One report detailed the accidental death of a worker:

1879, October 30: "Jas. [James] Albert...of New Berne, was killed at the works on Neuse River, near Harper's Landing, last Thursday. The hands on the derrick had tackled a log and drawn it up and Albert had got on the light end to balance it so that it could be more easily landed when the tackling slipped causing the ragged end of the log to strike him in the stomach, disemboweling him, producing death in a very short while. Coroner [George T.] Brown was notified and summoned a jury and held an inquest. Verdict—accidental death." (*Kinston Journal*)

Various steamers, including the '*May-Bell*,' *Neuse*, and *Sue*, made business and passenger stops at Harper's Landing over the years:

1881, January 27: "The steamer *Neuse* is making trips to Harper's Landing above Kinston. On her last trip 1,200 bushels of oyster shells were carried for Mr. W[illiam] L[afayette] Kennedy." (*Kinston Journal*)

1898, May 4: "The steamer, *Sue*, from New Bern, in charge of Capt. Dixon, passed by on her way to Harper's Landing, about nine miles up the [Neuse] River, where she received a load of persimmon wood Tuesday. She returned that afternoon." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)

1898, May 31: "A jolly crowd of lads and lassies and men and women left [Kinston] this morning on the '*May-Bell*' [steamer] for Seven Springs, it being the occasion of the annual picnic of the M[ethodist] E[piscopal] Church. There was a big lot of well-filled (we suppose) baskets. The entire party seemed to be in fine humor to enjoy themselves, and we would like to have gone along, but couldn't. Some of the sweet girls had tags pinned on their dresses, labeled 'M E S S' without any periods after each letter. The '*May-Bell*' was efficiently officered by Capt. Ernest Pittman. The boat left at five minutes after 8 o'clock....About 10:30 o'clock we [*The Daily Free Press*] received a cablegram from Harper's Landing that the '*May-Bell*' had safely reached that port....About 12:30...the young people were coupling up preparatory to strolling through the beautiful grounds surrounding Seven Springs..." (*The Daily Free Press*, Kinston)